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Asking them Questions

'They found Him sitting in the
midst of the doctors, both hearing
them, and asking them questions'

LUKE ii. 46

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To
THE BOYS
IN AND AROUND THE ROYAL MILE
AND ESPECIALLY THOSE OF THE
ST. GILES' CATHEDRAL CLUB
IN THE CANONGATE OF
EDINBURGH

'Bless the lads'
GENESIS XLVIII. 16

Preface

UNLIKE most books for boys, and for leaders, this one owes its genesis to the boys themselves, for it was from them that I learnt that one of the things a boy really needs is a right understanding of the Christian Faith.

This is how it happened. One night after our usual service in the Club Chapel, I handed to each boy a paper on which he was asked to write any question concerning the Christian Faith which perplexed him. These questions are in this book, every one of them actually asked by a member of our Club and Scout Troop, no one of whom was at the time over eighteen. The questions came to me as a revelation of just what boys are thinking. 'Fancy asking a question like that,' I said, as I looked over the questions, 'so he does think about other things besides football and swimming.' A telegraph messenger asked 'What was Christ's position as God if He prayed to God?'; an apprentice plumber about the 'Second Coming'; a butcher's messenger boy about the Trinity; a young gardener about the Soul; one schoolboy about the Vision of God; another about our Lord as a boy; and so on. More than half the questions were about subjects like Heaven and Hell, evil, sin, and suffering (involving the extent of the power of God), and the relation of Jesus Christ to God.

I saw at once the mistake we, in our Clubs, Brigade Companies, and Scout Groups so often make, of presenting to our boys a vague and sentimental watered down religion, as if the Christian religion were *merely* 'living a decent life, keeping fit, helping others, and all that sort of thing'. . . . Then they grow up and leave us, the best of them resolving to be fit and to do their best. This, of course, is a good thing, as far as it goes, and I am sure that it is pleasing in God's eyes. *As far as*

it goes, but it appears to me now more than ever that it does not go far enough. I once heard Colonel Ronald B. Campbell say that missionaries of the Church who go abroad to 'break new ground' are known to do two things; first they build a church, then, they make a football pitch. In our organizations we certainly need both; but notice, 'first they build a church'. Unless we put before our boys first the Church and all that it stands for, our work is surely of little permanent value. To say that they don't want religion is not only false, but clearly beside the point. Boys have ever been the same; and as our Lord when a boy was eager to know more about His religion, and was found by His parents sitting in the midst of the doctors, asking them questions, so, too, the boy of to-day is equally interested. 'The religion of the inarticulate', as Donald Hankey called it, is not the religion of indifference; and because people are unwilling to speak about religion, it does not mean that they are not interested. Indeed, this book would seem to prove that that is far from being the case.

With these questions before me, it struck me that surely this would be a great and unique opportunity for some of our finest scholars and churchmen, men whose books and articles are usually impossible for a boy to understand, to help youth in a very real way. Could they not help our boys to understand better the great truths of our religion by giving them in as simple and short a way as possible the great benefit of their knowledge and experience? But . . . would they do it? Hopefully, I approached Professor A. E. Taylor and Professor H. R. Mackintosh; and, with the kindness and courtesy so characteristic of them, they readily agreed to help us. The first answers were printed in our club magazine, *The Canongate Chronicle*, and in that way our book began to grow.

To thank all the contributors for their interest and

help seems but a small way of appreciating all that they have done for us. Great, indeed, has been the privilege of our boys to have had the opportunity of 'sitting among the doctors', and, as it were, 'asking them questions'. We felt that others should have a chance of sharing this privilege; for boys are very much the same everywhere; our boys' questions must be other boys' questions (and are not most *men*, in matters of religion, very much boys!). And so this book is published in the hope that it may help others, whether boys, or girls, or their leaders, as much as it has helped us.

I feel that a word or two of caution is needed. No one author is in any way responsible for the opinions of the others; and naturally there may be in some cases divergence of opinion. But this book would fail in its purpose if it were to be regarded as a collection of infallible answers to the questions asked in it. Each answer to a particular question is the answer of a particular man, and he alone is responsible.

A second point is this. There are, of course, very many more questions that might well have been asked. This book does not claim to answer all religious questions! It deals only with certain questions that certain boys have actually asked.

Then—a third point—though these questions, as has been explained, came from a club, no organization should ever try to usurp the legitimate place of the Church. Prayers in the club, whether held in a Chapel or a club room, instruction in Bible Class or discussion group, should never be regarded as substitutes for attendance at Divine worship in the Church. But, as members of the Church, it must be one of our duties, even as it is our privilege, to do all we can to help the Church, and to lead others to it. 'Go out to the roads and hedges and make people come in, to fill up my house.'¹

¹ Luke xiv. 23 (Moffatt).

And the last point is this. No amount of knowledge about religion will ever make a man religious. To know about our Lord Jesus Christ is not the same thing as to know Him.¹ Yet, is it not almost impossible to know any one unless we know something about him? And no amount of argument can ever by itself convince a man. As Dr. Edwyn Bevan has so truly said, 'Argument, generally speaking in religion, can do no more than clear the track; it cannot make the engine move.'² But this is no reason for not 'clearing the track'. Faith, of course, there must ever be, and without it our religion is worth little. But the word 'faith', if we are not careful, can often become just another name for laziness. Our Lord studied the Scriptures, and, as we have seen, asked questions. Dare we do less than follow His example? And can we do more than pray that His Spirit may be given to us as we earnestly seek after the truth, so that we may day by day, in our journey through life, try to become more like Him?

Not all the papers are easy to understand; some require careful thought, and help from older people; but it is not a bad thing for a boy to find that truth is not always easily comprehensible: many things may be seen through a glass darkly:

'... a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's heaven for?'

Some difficult or uncommon words are explained in the index at the end.

RONALD SELBY WRIGHT

ST. GILES' CATHEDRAL CLUB,
CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.
St. Andrew's Day 1935.

¹ Note Dr. Moffatt's translation of John v. 39: 'You search the Scriptures, imagining you possess eternal life in their pages—and they do testify to me—but you refuse to come to me for life.'

² Edwyn Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 273.

Note

I SHOULD like to express my very sincere thanks to all those whose encouragement and help have meant so much to me in my happy task of compiling and editing this book, especially Mr. J. C. Meikle of the Oxford University Press, and Mr. Tom Curr, captain in The Boys' Brigade. Among others, I should like to mention Mr. James Stevenson, K.C., M.P., Chairman of our Club Trustees, Mr. Walter Hewitson Brown of the Scottish Association of Boys' Clubs, the Rev. D. A. McCrury, M.A., Chaplain to the Army in India, the Rev. W. Roy Sanderson, M.A., of Lochgelly, four of my colleagues at the Club, Mr. James P. Shaw, M.A., LL.B., Mr. Alastair C. Blair, B.A., LL.B., W.S., Mr. George R. Thomson, B.L., Ph.D., and Mr. Cyril Jones, M.A., and three of my boys, James Dalglish, Jack Cropper, and Stanley McLean. I should like also to acknowledge the help so readily and kindly given by Professor H. R. Mackintosh, Professor John Baillie, and the Rev. John B. Logan, when I had occasion to consult them.

On another page I have already thanked all the contributors to whom, of course, this book owes everything; but I should like to add here a word of thanks to those who, for various reasons, were not able to contribute, but who showed an interest as encouraging as it was real. Notable among these are Canon F. R. Barry, the Right Rev. E. W. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, Canon B. R. Brasnett, the Very Rev. Principal David S. Cairns, the Rev. A. Nevile Davidson, Dr. T. R. Glover, Canon Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, Bt., the Right Rev. Sir David Hunter-Blair, Bt., Abbot of Dunfermline, the Right Rev. Albert David, Bishop of Liverpool, the Very Rev. Principal J. Harry Miller, Dr. W. E. Orchard, the Very Rev. Professor W. P. Paterson, Canon C. E. Raven, the Very

Rev. Principal Sir George Adam Smith, Professor N. Kemp Smith, Father E. N. Talbot, and Canon Don, who wrote on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, expressing his Grace's real interest in our book.

A word of explanation is, I know, due, for including a paper by myself among so distinguished a body of contributors. This, I need hardly say, was not part of the original plan, but resulted from the last minute withdrawal of the intended contributor, owing to sudden illness.

Some of the papers have already appeared in *The Canongate Chronicle*, the magazine of St. Giles' Cathedral Boys' Club; and those by Canon Sheppard and the Rev. Pat McCormick in the *St. Martin's Review*. The subject of Dr. Dearmer's article is more fully treated in his book, *The Legend of Hell*. The papers by Father Bull remain his copyright.

I am indebted to Father Talbot, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, for permission to publish the article by the late Bishop Charles Gore.

Any profits that may come from the sale of this book will go to the National Association of Boys' Clubs.

RONALD SELBY WRIGHT

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Introduction

MR. RONALD SELBY WRIGHT, of whose vision and enterprise this book is the fruit, is indeed to be thanked as well as congratulated. Multitudes of young people, and also of those who have long since left their youth behind them, will have cause for gratitude that such a volume has been made available. The questions to which an answer is offered in these pages knock at the door of every heart, and to meet them Mr. Wright has marshalled a goodly company representative of all branches of the Christian Church.

This book, unique in character, and supplying, as it does, a long-felt need, will certainly arouse much interest and should prove a powerful apologetic for the Christian religion. It is my earnest prayer that it will have a wide circulation both at home and beyond the seas, confirming in assurance those whose faith already is established, and leading many who are beset by doubts and difficulties to a clearer knowledge of Him who is the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

May the Lord prosper it to the greater glory of His Name, and the advancement of His Kingdom.

CHARLES L. WARR

Who Made God?

THIS is a question often asked, and I suppose a question which many people have found it very difficult to answer. Let us see for a moment what can be done with it.

To begin with, it might not be a bad thing to inquire whether the question 'Who made God?' has any real meaning at all. Because, of course, if it has no *meaning* whatever, to answer it will not be easy. And remember there are plenty of questions which don't have any meaning. You can manufacture dozens of them if you try. You might even play a game of making them up. Here are two: How much does the Calton Hill love Leith Walk? Or again: Why is a top when it spins? Years ago we used to ask each other that second puzzle as a good joke; but it had no more meaning than the answer, which was: Because the higher the fewer. So that some questions can be quite meaningless. Perhaps the question 'Who made God?' is one of them.

If only we consider what the word *God* stands for, it rather looks as if this were the case here. What ought to be in our minds when we utter that great Name? The Apostles' Creed is a fairly good guide. There we find God described as 'the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth'. That tells us that He made everything there is. But if He made everything there is, it is not easy to see how anything could be left over which could make *Him*. Whatever might be named as having created God would, of course, turn out to have been created by Him first, for after all it would be one of the things 'in heaven and earth'.

Let me emphasize three points, or rather let me state one point in three different ways.

1. If you say 'Who made God?' you imply that some-

body or something existed before God, with the power to call Him into being. Let us call this somebody or something XY. Now we seem to have got everything nicely settled: we know now who made God. It was XY. But at once, if you tell this to a friend, he replies: But who made XY, please? And if you have your answer ready and say—Who made XY? Why, of course it was AB. Then instantly he asks: And who made AB? And so it goes on for ever. You just go round and round in a circle, aimlessly. All your questions and answers leave you exactly where you were at the start.

2. If you say 'Who made God?' that implies that we can really form the idea of a 'made' God. But *made* and *God* are words—the one an adjective, the other a noun—that simply won't go together. They are like oil and water; they won't mix. Not all adjectives suit all nouns. I can speak of a piercing sound, but I can't speak of a green sound. If I talk about a sweet taste, people understand me perfectly, but not if I talk of a square taste. A square taste is nothing at all. And in the same way, a 'made' God is nothing at all. The adjective and the noun fly apart as soon as you try to connect them with each other. Wood made of iron is not really wood, and a made God is not really God.

3. If you say 'Who made God?' what you have in mind is not the idea of God, but the idea of an idol. Among heathen nations to-day, just as in Bible times, the village carpenter makes an idol or little god out of wood, and he uses the chips left over when the idol has been made to cook his dinner. You will find all that described, with scorn and irony, in the 44th chapter of Isaiah. But then an idol is not God. An idol is something that men kick downstairs when it has disappointed them. But God is He who created us and in Christ has redeemed us.

* Perhaps you may ask, But why should we just have to accept the fact that you can't go behind God and tell how

He came to be made? Well, in science as much as in religion we have simply to accept things. Scientific men to-day assure us that there can be no movement in the universe more rapid than the movement of light. The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. Why should that be the swiftest motion that is possible in the world? Nobody knows why, but it is.

What would Jesus Christ have said if we had gone up to Him and said: 'Who made God?' I think He would have smiled—a friendly smile, of course. But if you had spent a day in His company, after an hour or two you would have felt that the notion of a 'made' God could not have entered His mind. When He said: 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth', He was thinking of 'the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth'. God is before all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created.

HUGH R. MACKINTOSH

If God Made Everything, Who Made Evil?

THE question is an important one, so you will not expect the answer to be a cheap one, that you could rattle off in a line or two. We do not mean to shirk trying to give the answer as well as we can; and we can trust you to think it over as seriously as you can.

Evil is not a 'thing' at all. So no one could make it and no one ever did. 'But then', you say, 'if there isn't any evil, how can I call anything "bad"? Cannot I do any "bad" actions?'

What do I mean by 'bad'? I call a thing 'bad' when it has *not* got certain qualities that I judge it ought to have, in the circumstances. By a 'good' apple, I mean an apple that I can eat and enjoy. A 'bad' apple is either one that is not 'ripe'—that has *not* yet become juicy, or sweet enough: or, an apple that has become 'over-ripe'—that has *no more* got its firmness, or proper colour, or sweetness. But, N.B., all the chemicals that compose it—oxygen, hydrogen, &c.—are *perfectly good* chemicals, all the time. Suppose I give you a pencil and piece of paper, and say: 'Draw a circle.' You do so; and I say: 'That is a bad circle.' I do not mean that the line you have drawn is not a good line so far as that goes, but, it has *not* got the qualities that make it into a circle: it may be all sorts of other curves; but it is not 'circular'.

But now you might say, 'Well, but there are all sorts of qualities I haven't got, and things I can't do—I can't fly like a bird or jump like an antelope or stop under water like a fish. But you wouldn't call me a bad man for that?' Certainly not. I didn't say you called things 'bad' because they lacked just *any* sort of qualities, but because they lacked certain qualities they 'ought' to have—for instance, I don't say you have bad sight because you haven't got eight eyes—as a human creature you are not

meant to have eight eyes: but I could say you had 'bad' sight if your two human eyes lacked something that they ought to have, if they are to be properly useful. For instance, if they are shaped so that you can't see at a reasonable distance—if they have *not* got the proper shape for doing so, *then* I can say you have 'bad' eyes.

So 'badness' is not a thing at all: it is the *absence* of something that 'ought' in the circumstances to be there. So God did not create 'badness': no one can create, or make, a 'non-thing'. This is by far the hardest part of our argument; but if you can see it, you will see all the rest.

Now what you are really worrying about is, not the 'badness' of an apple or an eye, but 'moral' badness; that is, badness in human men and women, which is really in their minds, though it may show itself in their decisions and their acts. But the same principle holds good. Suppose I take a knife and kill a man by stabbing him with it. Now my knife is good, all the muscular actions of my arm are good, my aim is good; but then I have *not* got a proper state of mind and will with regard to that man. Either I shut away from my mind all sorts of thoughts about him and myself—such as, that to kill him is cruel because he has a wife and children depending on him; or, that it is out of all proportion to kill a man because he has come across me while I was burgling his house; or, above all, that I, a mere man, simply have no right over the life of my fellow man—well, I may either *put* all this out of my mind; or fury may as it were 'black it out'—but in any case, certain thoughts are *not* in my mind which *ought* to be there.

Take a very important topic, which deserves to be spoken of very clearly and at greater length—a 'bad' use of your bodies. Now your bodies are part of God's creation and are good, and all their instincts are good. But I can misuse my body or instincts by shutting out certain thoughts from my mind. For instance, I can use

my body properly, so as to become a father when I am married, and so make the most beautiful thing in the world—a good home and a happy family. But then, I can shut out all ideas about this full and proper use of myself, or again, 'blind' passion may possess me so that I don't think at all, or finally, I may feel that I 'can't' help myself. Then I shall make a 'wrong use' of my body, or allow my instincts to 'master' me. The result is, that I can do things that 'fall short' of the right action in the right circumstances *by so much*, that my action must be called 'wrong'.

All these and other 'wrong' actions come back in the long run to a form of selfishness. I *shut out* all the thoughts that I ought to have, as a man living 'socially' among men; and you see this especially on a large scale, as when there is a war, or a great fraud. Why do men commit fraud? Because they want to get something (money, or power) for *themselves*, without paying any attention to the people they get it from. Hence you may find a man, or a company, 'exploiting' his employees. (Do not forget that an employee can 'cheat' the man he has made an agreement with just as badly as the employer can cheat *him*.) Or you may find a country (which means its politicians) saying: 'I need a bit of territory and the trade it will bring in. Yes; I know it belongs to Africans: but they are mere niggers and they can't hurt me. Besides, France wants it, and so does Germany; and I must get it first, and if they try any games, I will go to war with them, I don't care how many lives it costs on this side or that!' Land lust; money lust—that is the origin of wars—it isn't God who makes them. It is myself, making a bad use, that is, a selfish use, of my intelligence and my power of choosing and deciding. I shut out any amount of things I ought to think of and remember, and concentrate on nothing but my personal or national advantages.

But finally, you might say: 'God is responsible, after

all, in the long run, because He made men *able* to *leave out* better and larger thoughts, and think only in a selfish way; and *able* to decide to act for the pleasure or advantage of the moment. Why did He not make them *unable* to think and choose anything save what was fully true and fully good? The answer is: 'Because in that case they wouldn't have been *free* at all. It is better to be free—free even to do wrong—than to be *forced* even into doing good. If I couldn't help doing what was good, I should be like a machine, which can't help acting properly so long as it is properly stoked up and till its parts wear out. It is better to be a man than a machine.' You see? God would contradict Himself if He said: 'I give you Free Will', and then immediately *forced* your will into a 'one way' decision only.

So even moral evil comes about, you see, on a large or a small scale, from men shutting out a certain amount of truth from their minds, and then acting as though what they are not looking at does not exist. God creates man, and gives him certain powers, and then, man does *not* use those powers properly. It is always *man* who starts to do the act, which, in its circumstances, can be wrong; it is never God who forces him to, or creates a 'wrong' thing. And we really all know that. You cannot anywhere find a man or a race which does not see a difference between 'right' and 'wrong'. Men do not always put the difference in the same place; but even a native in the heart of Africa has a whole list of things he regards as 'wrong'. For instance, he may think it a true kindness to kill his parents once they get old and sick; but he would think it wrong to kill them while they were young and healthy. This is an affair of 'educating the conscience'. Besides, it is far more difficult for us to think clearly and choose properly than it should be, simply because men have done wrong for such a long time, and so many men do wrong round about us. There is a sort of 'current' of wrong ideas

(such as that money is the only thing that counts, no matter how you get it), and of wrong behaviour (such as wrongdoing with women), that the man who wants to act right has to beat his way up-stream, so to say—against the current. But then, though God will not force you to do right—for He respects your free will—He will give you plenty of help. 'For them who love Him, God *makes* all things work together for good'—that is the right translation of St. Paul's words. 'But say what you will—it's very difficult!' Yes. But then you wouldn't insist, would you, on having a soft job merely? Christ is your friend, and your captain. You would feel rather second-rate if you said to Him: 'Oh yes, I'll do a job—but mind You make it soft!'

C. G. MARTINDALE

Is There Just One God? If so, Why Say 'Three in One'?

THERE is only one God. Those who believe in the Trinity do not believe that there are more gods than one. What they are trying to put into words is the truth about God, as they have been able to reach it by thinking about the way in which God has revealed Himself.

The world does not explain itself, but needs God for its explanation. Because there is only one universe, there can be only one God. In the beliefs of many peoples in different parts of the world there have been 'gods many and lords many', and there are countries in which this is the case even to-day: but such religions cannot stand criticism, and in the long run modern scientific and philosophical thought, if it spreads universally, is bound to destroy them. The only religion which in the modern world can survive must be a religion which asserts firmly that God is One.

But of what *nature* is God? Can He be known? Does He *make* Himself known? Is He worshipped? What is His character? These are the real questions which the religious mind asks. St. Paul affirmed that the 'invisible things' of God 'since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity';¹ and by this St. Paul meant that God is revealed, up to a certain point, in the world of Nature—that at least the 'everlasting power and divinity' of God might be inferred from His works. But this is only a beginning. God is disclosed not only in Nature; He has, as Christians believe, disclosed Himself also in history; and He has revealed Himself by means of His 'Word'.

¹ Romans i. 20.

More especially has God revealed Himself in and through the religious and national story of the people of Israel, as the prophets and other Old Testament writers interpret it. It is a long tangled history; and it needs to be critically studied, if it is to be understood in the best way. But God is disclosed, and God discloses Himself, in the Old Testament as the Living One, personal, active, holy and righteous, revealing Himself to His people, evoking their loyalty, claiming their worship, and demanding, from those who would worship Him, that they should be 'holy' as He is 'holy'.

The Old Testament leads on to the New; and in the New Testament the process of God's self-revelation goes further. He who 'of old time' had 'spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners' was now more fully declared and made known in His 'Son'. The Lord Jesus Christ, considered as a person of history, appears to have made for Himself the most singular claims. It is not only the case that He from time to time spoke of Himself as 'the Son', or that He habitually thought and spoke of God as His 'Father'; still more striking, in some ways, is the manner in which, while on the one hand He displays throughout His whole life the spirit and temper of a completely unqualified obedience and submission to God's will, on the other hand He summons men to Himself, calls them to follow Him, and claims from them towards both Himself and His cause the same kind of unqualified loyalty as can only be given rightly to God. He speaks always, in all His teaching, with the assurance as of a spiritual authority which is absolute. There is good evidence that He both spoke and thought of Himself as man's ultimate Judge. These and similar claims, if they are to be taken seriously—and the Christian Church does take them seriously—involve a problem with regard to the 'Person' of Christ. The question arises: Who is this Person, who talks and

who behaves in this way? How does He really stand, in relation to God and to man? It is to be observed that He is, throughout the New Testament, set forth as the bringer of religious salvation; that He is affirmed, after His death, to have reappeared as Death's Conqueror; and that 'repentance unto the remission of sins' is proclaimed as a message of good news, as from God, in His name. Assuming that Jesus is not an impostor, who is He?

The Christian Church had to think out the problem; and, in the end, what the Church said was as follows. On the one hand, the Christ who thus makes these stupendous claims, and for whom such claims are made, is in the fullest and truest sense Man, with a manhood which is not sham, but genuine; but, at the same time, He is, on the other hand, in respect of the ultimate mystery of His Person, Himself actually, and from all eternity, God: He is Himself a proper object of worship; He is, in the core of His essential being, Himself one with the Eternal Father whom he reveals and proclaims. Jesus Christ (it is affirmed) is, in the core of His being, none other than the eternal Word—the 'Self-expression' (as it were) of God—incarnate in manhood, and becoming 'obedient unto death' for mankind. In the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him crucified, there is made known the supreme self-disclosure of God: and in the Lord Jesus Christ God discloses Himself as essentially holy, redemptive love.

But there is more yet. The Church, which adores God in Christ, and which through Him worships the Father, knows also of a Spirit within; a divine, active, personal agency, who is at once the Inspirer and Guide of all true spiritual life, and the Source and Bestower of all supernatural gifts of the Divine Grace. Described in the New Testament as the Holy Spirit at once of Christ and of God, the Spirit is known by His fruits;¹ and the 'fruits' of

¹ Galatians v. 22 ff.

the Spirit—love, joy, peace, and the rest—are to be discerned in the strange new miracle of the Christian and Christlike character, the persistent recurrence of which, wherever the Gospel is preached and wherever the Christian Church truly lives unto God, is the real witness of the continuing presence and activity and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Father, Son, Spirit—has there not been, as a matter of actual fact, a 'threefoldness' in God's self-revelation? Must not the threefoldness in the manner of God's self-revelation, if the revelation be real, point to a mysterious threefoldness in God as He is in Himself? The Christian Church, in what is taught as to the Trinity, is not perversely trying to make out God to be three, rather than one. On the contrary, what the Church is attempting to do is, on the one hand, to do justice to the threefold character of God's self-revelation, and yet, on the other hand, to assert all the time the fundamental truth of the oneness of God. 'And yet', cries the Church, 'there are not three Gods: but one God.'

JOHN DERBY

How can God be Everywhere at the Same Time?

I HAVE been asked to write a few words in reply to the question, 'How can God be everywhere at the same time?' It will probably conduce to clearness if I set down at once the answer which would be given by the greatest thinkers of historic Christianity to this question, and then add some words of explanation; though it must be remembered that in treating of so profound and mysterious a question, any 'explanation' that I can give in the space at my disposal must necessarily be of a somewhat sketchy nature.

As it is necessary for every discussion to begin by taking something for granted, I shall assume that it is agreed that God exists, in the sense that there is an infinite personal Spirit who is the source and ground of all forms of being other than Himself, and that what I have to do is not to demonstrate His existence but to make some attempt to clear up the difficulties which arise when we begin to think about His relations to the material universe and especially to that dimension of it which we call space.

How, then, can God be everywhere? The historic Christian answer, bluntly and paradoxically expressed in order to stimulate thought, is simply this—that He isn't! He is, strictly speaking, nowhere; for He is pure Mind, pure Spirit, 'without body, parts, or passions', and, consequently, He is not in space at all. The concept of space is completely inapplicable to Him; for space is that which contains bodies, and God neither is, nor has, a body. The limitations of our minds make it almost impossible to escape from spatial metaphors when speaking of these deep things; so, if the seeming illogicality.

of using a spatial expression in order to deny God's spatiality may be pardoned, it is true to say that God is not so much in as *behind* all space; He is not in space, but rather all spaces and all times exist in Him, who Himself is completely outside of and unconditioned by them.

The first point in this answer which demands our consideration is the affirmation of God's complete immateriality and incorporeality. It is, of course, difficult for us to imagine a personal Mind and Will which have no physical basis, no material instrument at all; for the only personal beings of whom we have that firsthand knowledge which comes through sight and hearing and touch, that is to say ourselves and our fellow men, obviously are linked with, and immersed in, matter, in the sense that all our thinking and willing and loving is carried out through a material brain and nervous system. But an idea is not irrational because we cannot make an imaginative picture of it; mathematics and philosophy abound with concepts which are perfectly intelligible without being in the least imaginable. And though our own minds are in fact bound up with certain masses of grey matter which can be weighed and measured, yet the thought which uses them as the instrument of its self-expression has neither mass nor dimensions. The brain of an Einstein is of a certain size and has a certain determinate weight; but you cannot say that the theory of relativity, as such, has any local site, dimensions, or weight. Even in our own imperfect personalities, therefore, thought to a large extent transcends—that is oversteps or goes beyond—its material vehicle; and it is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose that in the supreme and perfect personality it is completely transcendent over matter, in the sense of not being dependent upon it at all. Indeed, God, if He *is*, *must* be bodiless and immaterial; for, if He had a body, He would be part of the universe,

like ourselves; He would be merely a magnified man, and we should have to postulate another, ultimate, and purely spiritual God behind Him, to explain both Him and the rest of the universe. St. Augustine¹ tells us that, whilst he was still a Manichaean and unable to free himself from materialistic modes of thought, he tried to imagine the omnipresent Deity as a kind of very subtle ether, uniformly diffused throughout infinite space; but this childish conception obviously does not help us (if we are not willing to accept the idea of a purely incorporeal Mind), for such an absolutely undifferentiated medium would exhibit nothing at all analogous to the infinite complexity of our own cerebro-neural organizations.

I do not know enough about physics to be able to say whether the conception of the ether still holds its ground amongst men of science; but I am reasonably sure that no one has ever claimed to discover in it (if it exists) any traces of a super-brain or a cosmic nervous system. We must, then, hold fast to the immateriality of God, which involves His non-spatiality. He is nowhere in particular in respect of His essential being, but He *acts* everywhere without exception in respect of His infinite power. When the Old Testament books, or some of them, suggest that Jehovah was localized on the top of Mount Sinai or in the ark, we must regard this as an idea belonging to the infancy of religion, of which the record has been providentially preserved in order to enhance our admiration of the wisdom of God which has been able to develop our own exalted faith out of such naïve and primitive beginnings. When the Book of the Revelation describes Heaven as a city four-square, with the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst thereof, this is the language of conscious metaphor; Heaven is not a place but a state, the state of free, unimpeded enjoyment of the Vision of

¹ *Confessions*, vii. 1.

God. If we sing Faber's hymn, 'Jesu, gentlest Saviour', with its affirmation:

Out beyond the shining
Of the farthest star
Thou art ever stretching
Infinitely far,

we shall interpret this as the language of devotion rather than of science; we shall not understand this as affirming that the Divine essence fills the whole of space, as though it were a fluid, but rather as a poetical way of affirming that God, being completely outside space, can and does touch the universe, which is in space, at every point.

But how can God, if He is completely immaterial, without body, size, or dimensions, completely outside of and undetermined by space, act on and continuously sustain this created material world, in that all-pervasive and intimate manner which is sometimes described by the statement that God is 'immanent' in the world? Formally, it would be a sufficient reply to this question that in fact He does—for otherwise we should have to assume that the world was an independent power, which, again, would involve the further consequence that God was not really God, but only one of two powers equally existing in their own right. If the fact of God's continuous action upon the world be admitted, it might be said that that should be enough for us, and that the 'how' is His own secret. Nevertheless, it is natural that we should make some attempt to make the 'how' clear to our own minds: The solution, or sketch of a solution, of this profound problem which has commended itself to many of the greatest and most truly religious thinkers of mankind, may best be summed up, not in my own words, but in those of the famous astronomer and physicist, Sir James Jeans:

'The universe can be best pictured, although still very imperfectly and inadequately, as consisting of pure thought, the

thought of what, for want of a wider word, we must describe as a mathematical thinker.

'In the stately and sonorous diction of a bygone age, Bishop Berkeley summed up his philosophy in the words:

' "All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without the mind. . . . So long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit."

'Modern science seems to me to lead, by a very different road, to a not altogether dissimilar conclusion. . . . It does not matter whether objects "exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit" or not; their objectivity arises from their subsisting "in the mind of some Eternal Spirit".

'To-day there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not of course our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts.¹

If we follow this guidance, and regard the world as bearing the same relation to God as our own thoughts and ideas do to our own minds, we shall be in the possession of a concept which will to some extent help us to understand how God can be nowhere in particular and yet act everywhere; and we shall find a new and deeper meaning in the familiar words:

Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit: or whither shall
I go then from thy presence?

¹ *The Mysterious Universe*, pp. 136-7, 148.

If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also.

If I take the wings of the morning: and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me.

N. P. WILLIAMS

Do 'Visions' of God Really Come?

IN this matter it is well to know quite clearly what we mean by the vision of God. For, if we mean the actual physical vision by our eyes of some appearance other than what is of this world, it is necessary to ask those who have had such an experience. There have been men in times past and there are men in the present who are convinced that they have seen with their bodily eyes what belongs to a world outside our own. As I have never had such an experience, I can say nothing about it. In the same way there are men who assure me that they are themselves possessed of such a power as telepathy or that they have known friends with the gift of second sight. There are others, of whom I am one, who are possessed of no such extraordinary powers. We can listen respectfully to what such men relate of the things they have seen and the experiences they have had in these matters. But we must stand aside and listen, because any such powers have been denied to us.

Yet there are simpler powers that are at every man's command and by which some men believe that they can reach a vision of God. For myself I go out in this winter weather and look at the trees which are more beautiful than in summer. They are not hidden in masses of green leaves, but each of them has its own shape—all different, but all lovely. There is the ash with its sharp angles and its twigs like stubby fingers; there is the birch with its dainty grace showing in its entire shape and in every branch. No two are alike and yet all of them are very fair. Or I have looked from Corstorphine Hill or from the side of the Pentlands on a clear frosty day across the valley of the Forth to the line of the Highland hills in the north. They ranged along the horizon with the sharp-cut white of the snow on them making them stand out

against the blue of the sky above. The delicate and simple dignity of their outline makes the sight of them a pure joy. It is not always the same but shifts as the sunlight gives a changing tint to the white snow, but, however it varies, it always remains beautiful. Or I know that after another month the first snowdrop will hang its head above the dank, sodden earth. The delicate creature will push its way through the ground, and will show the blue veins that run through its white bell.

All these things are quite useless for men's work or for men's food. The world might have fed men with perfect efficiency and have been as uninteresting as a potato-field where the workers are lifting the potatoes. Instead of that it is constantly surprising us men with glimpses of unearthly loveliness. And these things which delight men so deeply and which are there for us all cannot have come by chance. They make part of the world in which we live, just as much part of it as the work it demands and the tasks it lays on us and all the rest of its routine. They mean as much to him who has once seen them as anything else which he can see. Ever and again the man who sees them has the sense that he is watching a great Artist at work, who delights in the work of His hands and who makes these works of His hands in such a way that they equally delight the other works of His hands, the men whom He has made.

The constant and changing beauty of the world has always brought to me a vision of God.

Sometimes, again, a man has to make up his mind as to what he means to do. Two ways are open to him. One of them is the easier, and in it he should not fail for company, because a good number of those whom he cannot but respect have no hesitation in taking it. They might even be surprised to hear that he thought of seeking another way. Yet the man cannot entirely crush down the uneasy feeling that this is not exactly the way which

answers to his ideas as to the real ends of life. He has no desire to be a prig or to judge his other friends who have no hesitation over the matter. After all they may not have seen the question exactly as he sees it—in this world every man has, some time or another, to recognize that his life is his own which is not the same as anybody else's and that he, not somebody else, must live it. So those other friends cannot help him very much at the time when he needs help more than a bit. At a time like that it is very quieting and strengthening to realize the answer or the decision which the Lord of all good life expects from one. He made a habit of setting before the men He met in Galilee the things of which He thought them capable. He stopped once in front of a publican's booth beside Gennesareth and said to one man that He could give him a more interesting life than that; and Matthew got up and left his work and never went back to it. He told another man the way in which he could be free and glad at heart, and the man could not take the road, because he had great possessions. But he went away sorrowful for all the rest of his life, for he knew that he could have taken the other way and that he had been afraid to cut loose.

There are these hours when we men can have and do have visions of God, and I have always found that the way one answers them makes a lot of difference.

ADAM C. WELCH

What is Meant by 'The Kingdom of God'?

A GREAT artist once said, in his old age, that he could perfectly remember the first occasion when he deliberately turned his back on what he called the Kingdom of God. He was a schoolboy at the time, home for the holidays, and one day as he walked down the village street, a little pleased with himself, as is the way of prefects from school, a small girl, to whom he was something of a hero, ran out of a cottage and offered him a bunch of rather faded flowers, no doubt the best she could procure. The boy passed her by without accepting the gift. Later, looking back a little ashamed, he saw the child in tears and the flowers scattered on the road.

Is that just a pretty story told by an artist of charm, or has it something rather tremendous to say to most of us? What is the Kingdom of God which the old man remembered having turned his back upon as a boy, and which we so often hear mentioned? Is it a reality or just a phrase that preachers and others delight in, so much sound and wind?

You will, of course, recollect how constantly the expression 'the Kingdom of God' was on the lips of our Lord. He was on fire with the idea of the Kingdom, it was *that*, and not the Church, that was His main and passionate concern. It was never long absent from His speech, and to Him it was of quite unsurpassable importance. In parable and metaphor and paradox He was always striving to explain this Kingdom of God, and to reveal its outlines. He was always inviting His followers to grasp its dimensions and make it their own, on His, and not on their terms. But he found it hard to explain the Kingdom He came to reveal in His Father's Name. Human speech seemed inadequate for the purpose. That Kingdom was here and yet to come,

within the human heart and yet outside it, of this world and yet of another, open to all and yet for those only who already possessed it. Above everything, too, the Kingdom was as a treasure hid in a field, to gain which a man might gladly give his all, even life itself. Can we make anything of what seems sometimes such a baffling mystery, we plain folk with no gift for theology or mysticism, we who sit loosely, if at all, to organized religion? We are right up against life and find it intensely baffling. Can the offer of Christ's Kingdom of God mean anything to us, or is it to-day only a bit of the stock-in-trade of religion, the mumbo-jumbo of its so-called exponents?

Will you bear with me while I try all haltingly to say what I believe the Kingdom of God means, and what its offer entails here and now? I think the Kingdom, as our Lord intended it for us, is the condition of living in which love, spelt with a capital L, really gets busy and wins through, as, for instance, it almost does for twenty-four hours on Christmas Day in this grey old world of ours. And I believe the offer of the Kingdom is the invitation which Jesus daily gives to you and to me to permit love and not hate to prevail now and here in our life, our work, and our home. When you see a mother gathering a frightened child in her arms you see as nearly as human eyes can God's offer of the Kingdom. I said 'offered daily', and I meant daily, for it is my deepest conviction that at least once in every twenty-four hours the offer of the Kingdom of God is still made in some perfectly simple and straightforward way to every child of God. It may be only in the form of a faded bunch of flowers to be accepted with gentle courtesy, or it may be as a Cross set on a height which we must storm with infinite courage, but, whatever the offer looks like, it is, I believe, a summons to us to give Love the pre-eminence and to allow it to prevail.

Light looked down and beheld darkness:

'Thither will I go,' said Light.

Peace looked down and beheld War:

'Thither will I go,' said Peace.

Love looked down and beheld hatred:

'Thither will I go,' said Love.

So came Light and shone,

So came Peace and gave rest,

So came Love and gave Light.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.¹

So came the offer of the Kingdom of God for us men and for our salvation. Now we may accept this daily offer or reject it, we may pass it by, as most often happens, not recognizing it for what it is, but I am utterly convinced that the offer itself and our attitude towards it are the most important facts in human existence. How are we to be sensitive to the offer of the Kingdom if it really daily comes our way, and quick to distinguish the authentic notes of the spiritual world from the false, the harmonies of heavenly music from the discords of the air in which the powers of evil may play their cunning hand? Be sure of this, nothing is easier, nothing more disastrous, than in a frenzy of goodwill to mistake what is purely an emotional appeal for the real thing, and to enter thereby into a kingdom of sentimentality, scarcely distinguishable from slosh, with its often unhealthy complications and its 'popular' religion. Nothing, on the other hand, is easier, nothing more disastrous, than in a frenzy of cold reason to mistake the real thing for the purely emotional, and enter thereby into a kingdom of inhumanity, where dwell the hypercritical, the hard of heart, and the clever who have forgotten to be wise. How shall we, avoiding the two extremes of softness of head and hardness of heart, become aware when Christ's offer of the Kingdom of Love presses upon us? The answer for most of us is, I

¹ Laurence Housman: quoted by permission.

believe, as simple as A B C. It is our gentleness of manner and kindness of heart that will make us aware of the Kingdom and sensitive to its appeal. Oh, yes indeed, I do know that Christianity is not a matter of being just pleasant, amiable, and hearty all round, but this I also know, that no one who is not at heart a gentleman or a gentlewoman can understand the religion of Christ. Blatancy, loud-voiced aggressiveness, biting sarcasm, roughness and rudeness of tongue, raucous self-assertiveness, cannot enter the Kingdom of God, because their noisy clamourings will drown the very sound of its coming. Man cannot return to earth to bully and brow-beat his neighbours when he has been with his Lord in Gethsemane and Calvary.

The French have a lovely expression for our word courtesy, they call it *la politesse du cœur*, the politeness of the heart. Let me leave that phrase with you. If in our daily life and our daily companying with Jesus Christ we can grow in courtesy, *la politesse du cœur*, we shall be increasingly sensitive to the appeal of the Kingdom and to that daily offer that comes to us from God Himself through Christ, to give love the pre-eminence, to enable it to prevail where we are.

Dare I, with respect, invite you to-morrow to ask yourself a question: 'During the last twenty-four hours has the Kingdom of God been offered to me in any shape or form?' If the answer be 'No', then will you ask this further question: 'Is it possible that it *was* offered, but that as yet I am not sufficiently gentle of manner and kindly of heart, and I have not yet obtained *la politesse du cœur*, by means of which I may hear and make response when Love calls?'

Lighten our Darkness, O Lord.

H. R. L. SHEPPARD

*How can God be Love? I always thought
He was a Person*

THERE is probably no word which is used in a wider diversity of uses than 'love'. It is therefore important to ask first about what kind of 'love' people are talking when they say 'God is love'. We can best start by striking out one or two kinds that are certainly not meant. That man, of whom we read so tragically often, standing in the police-court charged with ill treatment and neglect of his wife, once gained her trust with the words: 'I love you.' But this kind of love we may dismiss straight away; people who say that 'God is love' certainly do not mean that God can change as this man has changed towards his wife. And if we look more closely, we shall see why such 'love' will necessarily die in this way. 'Love' here is merely a passionate thirst of one bodily part of a man for satisfaction. That satisfaction attained, the desire perished and with it the 'love' perished too, because it is nothing more than bodily desire. Curiously enough there is a similarity between this 'sensuous love' and a second kind of 'love'. People in all seriousness sometimes say that they 'love' gooseberries or H.P. Sauce. As before, here too we speak of a bodily desire whose satisfaction is its own death. We cannot go on eating H.P. Sauce indefinitely, and still say we 'love' it. Such 'love' is for the consumption of the object 'loved', and when the object is destroyed, the 'love' dies with it. But no one who speaks of God as love means that He is a 'love' which in its satisfaction meets its death, or, in other slangy but equivalent words, that God can get 'fed up' with the things He loves. But we can also rule out a third kind of 'love' which is meant when I say 'that my cat or my canary 'loves' me. This obviously cannot be the 'love' which God is, for this reason. The

canary, if he 'loves' his owner with anything more than 'cupboard love', must do so partly in fear, and always with a sense that he is very incomprehensible and clever. But to think that God 'loves' with mingled emotions of fear, wonder, and admiration is grotesque.

What then is left? We have spoken of and dismissed our 'love' *for* things, and of things' 'love' *for* us; but there remains also a person's love *of* persons. The former cases were 'love *for*'; this case is 'love *of*'. The love which God is *may be*, for all we can yet say, similar to a man's faithful love of his wife, a woman's love of her child, or the love with which man loves man, three cases which we have not discussed and in which one person loves another person. Now let us come nearer the object of our search. Can we say that the love, which we are told God is, necessarily involves a person or persons? Some people are afraid to take 'love' applied to God seriously. Then, as some one has said, the love which God is becomes a 'vague kind of pink smell'. But if that is all we mean, then it is simply misleading to call God 'love'. Can you imagine a stream of love, a kind of vaguely throbbing, warmly pleasing flood, without either source or direction? That is what love would be if we could think of it apart from persons. But since this is simply nonsense, let us take the other alternative, and use 'love' of God as if we really meant it. What happens then? We see at once that real love involves a source and a direction, involves not merely a person but *two* persons; it implies a lover, and it implies a beloved one. Only to such a relation between two persons can we significantly apply the word 'love'. So by inspecting the meaning of the word, we find that if God is really love then He is a Person whose actions are those of love directed towards other persons who are its objects.

But we have not yet reached the heart of the matter. We have only seen that the word itself seems to imply

persons. Let us look at the most lofty conceptions of love of which we can think. Our ordinary human life is hedged about and shot through and through by love. Human life begins with love, the mother's love of her child. There is no lovelier sight on this earth than that of a mother playing with her children, nursing them perhaps, or telling some great noble story to them. Watch the glad smile playing over her lips, the happy eyes radiant and shining, and you will realize that the key to love such as this is in the present moment, in the self-sacrificial devotion of one person, manifesting the love that gives and requires no recompense. Think of friendship between man and man, not the friendship which is only a business relationship, carried on for what can be 'got out of it'. There is a friendship in which soul meets soul and all barriers fall. Or again turn to a man's love of a woman. There at its best you have two souls which, each in separation incomplete, together unite to lead one common life, manifesting a love so complete that it is simply nonsense to speak of reward, for each self has effaced its boundaries and lost itself in the other. But we know of something yet vaster, deeper, more immeasurable than even this. The child from birth shows signs of a returning love in quiet confidence and silent trust. The friends enjoy their mutual companionship. The husband and wife each hold the other's pledged troth, 'Till death do them part'. But God? Why, 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!' God '*first* loved us', and this love floods towards His enemies who were lost and wilfully straying to their own destruction. The measure of that love is 'that He gave His only begotten Son'. In the story of the Incarnation which culminates on Calvary, we have the measure of the fullness of the love of God. It is of course not the story of merely a single action of God, but the perfect symbol of God's work throughout the ages. The

fullest expression of this love is the human figure of a Person hanged upon a Cross. We have found that love necessarily implied persons as source and object. Can you imagine a love which is such that it will suffer agonies to win salvation for its beloved object but which is not the love of a Person?

There remains one more question to which we must address ourselves, since it is the source of the problem mentioned in the title. Admitting all the above as true, admitting that God has shown His love towards men in the gift of His son, why not merely say 'God is *loving*', rather than complicate things by saying 'God is *love*'. There are two points in answer to this. First, to us His creatures God's nature must always remain mysterious, for God would not be God unless He were unfathomable, though indefinitely apprehensible, by us. The supreme revelation of Himself has been given to us in the Incarnation. No daring flight of faith could have snatched this knowledge from God without His own revelation of Himself, and even yet it requires courage to 'hold that faith against the world'. But if we do cling to this revealed truth, the tangled skein of world and personal history falls into regular strands which mark out the paths of God's love; the scattered pieces of the jig-saw puzzle fit themselves together, and the whole is revealed to the eyes of faith, a picture of seeking and saving love at work. And more, love is a pervasive characteristic. It is not the kind of quality which can be merely *added* to our knowledge of God, as knowing the colour of a man's hair can be added to our already acquired stock of knowledge about him, without in the least affecting our knowledge of his truthfulness. In revealing God as loving, Christ showed us that God could never more be regarded as merely wrathful, or merely righteous, but that His is a wrath pervaded by love, and His a righteousness tempered by and subservient to love. Then we can no longer

say that God is merely *loving*. Christ lifts a corner of the veil between Creator and creatures, and we know that the clue to *all* God's nature is love; and we go on in the faith kindled by Christ's revelation to say: 'God *is* love'.

'How can God be love?' That is a question which in the end we cannot answer. It's incredible; it's true! We know that 'God is love', is a Person, a Shepherd who goes out seeking His straying sheep, a Father who loves His erring children. Thus when our eyes are fixed by the winsomeness, the loveliness of Jesus Christ, and to our hearts is revealed the meaning of the Incarnation, the question: 'How can God be love?' slips into insignificance, and our hearts thrill with the assurance: 'How can such love as is revealed be anything *other than* God?'

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!

I hear thy whisper in my heart;

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;

Pure universal Love thou art;

To me, to all, thy mercies move,

Thy nature, and thy name is Love.

J. K. S. REID

*Why, if God is Love and Almighty, and if
He loves every one individually, does
He permit such happenings as Earth-
quakes, causing the awful death of
thousands?*

I AM always very frank in my answers to these questions. I do not pretend to know more than I do, but I like to try and lay the spectres which are brought up to me; and who shall say that this is not a real spectre which we must face? It was said that more people were made atheists by the earthquake in Lisbon than by any other cause. I will answer this question in four compartments, as it were.

1. First of all, I do not profess to base my belief in the love of God upon anything that I see in the world to-day. I do not pretend to explain, for instance, why some young man is taken away to-day in the prime of life, and an old man of eighty left. No one can live very long in the world without seeing the futility of expecting or of trying to explain things like that. I base my belief in the love of God upon the Incarnation. That I say was a demonstration of love which was meant to last for all time, and in the strength of it, followed by the Resurrection, we were meant to face the trials and difficulties of life. 'Thou must love Me Who hast died for thee.' I have said that in the case of the great mass of mankind the happiness in life outweighs the unhappiness nine to one, which it certainly does; but we wanted this great demonstration of love to hold to in the midst of our trials and difficulties. I do not pretend to find my proof of the love of God in this difficult, perplexed, and very puzzling world as I see it to-day.

2. But, secondly, let us clear our minds of a great misunderstanding. Is the death of two hundred thousand people very different from the death that is going on every day? How many do you think die in London every day? One every eight minutes, day and night. That is about two hundred every day. It would be two hundred thousand, I suppose, in the whole world. And, therefore, are you not making too much of the fact of two hundred thousand dying in one day? Already there are tens of thousands dying. You must ask yourself this: whether you really mean in your mind that the fact of death at all, the fact of these thousands dying every day (earthquake or not) is going to upset your faith in the love of God. Now, death helps my belief in the love of God. The fact of death is increasing human happiness enormously. Suppose there was no death, what would happen? All the people who were living years ago, and are living now, would go on increasing in numbers on this little planet, and growing older, and older, and older, and we should have lost the most beautiful thing in life, the old grandfather and the little child on his knee, the grandmother and her grandchildren around her. We are apt to lose sight of the fact that the great majority of people to-day enjoy life. I should not wish my nearest and dearest to live on when her faculties were gone, and she was too old to enjoy life. Death gives us, and secures to us, our best happiness in life. Do you not remember what Phillips Brooks says: 'God holds the infant like a mother, builds a wall round the strong man, as he fights the noonday battle of his life, and lays the bridge of sunset over which the old man's feet may walk serenely unto the eternal day'?

Death is passing into a sight of even more beautiful things if we have only the faith to believe it. As Canon Holmes quoted beautifully in his book on *Immortality*:

It is not good that life should know too soon
The lovely secrets kept for those who die.

Therefore I decline to accept the fact of thousands dying in a day as any evidence against the love of God. He only made us that so many millions of people might sun themselves in the sunshine of His own happiness; and death makes it possible to have so many more millions of people to enjoy life. They have their probation-time here, and if they did not pass away, there would be no room for the thousands of others to come.

3. Then comes the next part of the answer: Why should so many die suddenly? If you had read the geologists' explanation in one of our leading papers at the time, you would have seen the reason why that particular part of the world was so unsafe. It was the last made, the newest bit of earth that has come up and become firm. But we want to answer it not geologically, but theologically. I will tell you what I believe: I believe that all these great things are allowed to happen to prevent us from being drowned in security. We are living, as a matter of fact, upon a quaking jelly, which we call the earth's crust. It is not a solid thing at all. It lasts our time, but only lasts for a time. There is a much greater thing coming than the Messina earthquake—a perfectly inevitable thing—when the earth and all the things therein will be burnt up, when our little planet, struggling away from the sun all the time, but gradually losing its power of keeping away from it, will quite inevitably be drawn into the sun and be burnt up or, according to Sir James Jeans's last book, get farther away and be frozen to death. Our great danger in the world to-day is to have a totally wrong conception of our condition. We want to feel ourselves on solid earth, and to make our homes here. We drift into the idea that this is the place where we ought to be and stay; whereas, as a matter of fact, we are 'strangers and pilgrims on this earth'. What we ought to understand is that if we are found here when the earth is drawn into the sun we shall be burnt up, so far as our bodies are

concerned, with the earth, or frozen to death, if it is the other fate which awaits the earth. The reason, I believe, why God allows these startling calamities to happen on this little earth is to wake us up to a real idea of our condition. Some are simply going on as if they were going to stay here for ever, living as if they were going to live here for the next ten million years. These things wake us up. We live here for a few passing years, and then—this much you and I do know—the world is all done with, so far as we are concerned. That being the case, 'what manner of persons ought we to be', as St. Peter said, 'in all holy conversation and godliness, looking forward and hastening to the coming of the day of the Lord, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?'

I say, then, that while we rush to the rescue of the sufferers, while these great calamities bring out the love and sympathy of the world, let them not move us from our belief in the love of God. Death is no argument against the love of God; but let us take warning ourselves. Are we ready for sudden death ourselves? Are we ready when our turn comes to die?

A. F. LONDON

In the Presence of Suffering as a Means to an end, e.g. that the Works of God should be made Manifest, can one reasonably put Absolute Trust in God?

IT is related of Jesus Christ that he once said of a man born blind, whom he was about to heal, that his blindness was no punishment for sin, either on the part of his parents, or on his own in some ante-natal state of existence, but had happened 'that the works of God should be made manifest in him'. I am asked to consider a difficulty said to be raised by this narrative, which I shall do well to state almost in the words in which it has been submitted to me. The argument propounded to me is this:

1. God is represented to us on the authority of Christ as a being who inflicts suffering as a means to an end.
2. But a being who inflicts suffering as a means to an end is not limitless in goodwill and power. (This statement is assumed to be so self-evident as to require no proof.)
3. But the only being in whom it would be reasonable to place absolute trust would be one who was limitless in goodwill and in power.
4. Therefore God, as represented to us by Christ, is not a being in whom it is reasonable to put absolute trust.

That is, the suggestion is made that the very existence of suffering shows that it is unreasonable to put absolute trust in God.

What is to be said in reply to this suggestion?

(a) In the first place, I may remark that the statement

(1) reads more into the words of Christ than they necessarily contain. Christ does not say in that passage that God had *inflicted* the unfortunate man's blindness upon him. There is a great difference between purposely inflicting suffering and merely not intervening to prevent it. In the actions of men themselves, there may be cases in which, though it would show a defect of either power or goodness to inflict pain, it does not necessarily prove want of either not to prevent it. Obviously, if men are to have any freedom of action at all, they must be free to do various things which may lead to suffering for themselves, or for other men, or for both. A creature that was hindered by the intervention of some higher power whenever his actions would lead to any kind of painful consequences would no more be a free agent than one who was forcibly prevented from doing anything but that which is merely right. The correct way to state proposition (1) should therefore have been: 'God is represented to us as a being who *either* inflicts suffering *or* at any rate permits it, as a means to an end.' That God directly causes disease or suffering is never stated in the Gospels. (Indeed there is one story in which Christ speaks of a long-standing infirmity which he was about to heal as the work not of God, but of Satan.) It should be plain that if it is a purpose worthy of a being of perfect goodness and power to create free agents, the very execution of that purpose must involve the existence of suffering caused by ignorance, short-sightedness, or wilfulness in these created free agents. A world in which no suffering was *permitted* would be a world not of men and women but of marionettes.

(b) But apart from this, let us consider more carefully the statement (2) upon which the whole of the argument turns. 'A being who inflicts suffering as a means to an end is not limitless in goodwill and power.' It should be plain that when this statement is said to be self-evident, it

is being assumed that a being who is limitless in goodwill and power can have only one purpose, that of giving as much pleasure to all its creatures, and as little pain, as possible. Now surely this is an assumption that is by no means self-evident. Indeed, the great philosopher Kant long ago protested earnestly against the readiness of many divines and philosophers to take it for granted that if there is a God, God's only object must be to make His creatures as happy as possible. Such a purpose Kant said would actually be unworthy of a being of perfect goodness and wisdom. It would be thinking more worthy of God to say that his purpose is to make free creatures *deserving* of happiness by the right use they make of their own freedom. And clearly, unless we are prepared to assume that enjoyable feeling or pleasure is either the only good thing or the best of all good things, Kant was right. If noble character is a better good than pleasant feeling, it is *not* a proof of defective power or defective goodness in our Creator that he permits, or even sends, such suffering as is necessary to make the world a school in which the lessons of fortitude, patience, and compassionateness can be properly learned. Even among men, a father who made it his one and only object in his treatment of a son to shield the son from all experience of hardship and unpleasantness would be neither a wise nor a truly kind parent. Patience, courage, understanding, sympathy with our fellows, are goods for which, in a wise man's judgement, it is more than worth while to pay the price they cost. It is pure superstition to suppose that the only end a really wise and good Creator can possibly have is that of making every one comfortable at no expense. In our mature judgement of our earthly fathers, we often enough find reason to be most specially thankful to them that they did not bring us up too softly but exposed us to difficulties and temptations, and laid on us burdens which seemed at the time to be grievous. Which of us,

not being a mere fool, would dream of putting absolute trust in the wisdom and goodness of a father of whom we knew that his one supreme rule in dealing with his children was neither to cause nor to permit any kind of suffering, in other words, never to cross their inclinations, always to spare them any disagreeable experience or responsibilities, to shield them from ever learning self-command, patience, considerateness for each other, from the consequences of their own rashness, wilfulness, irresponsibility, in a word, to *spoil* them outright?

(c) Of course it may be said that these considerations do not sufficiently explain the mystery of human suffering. They do explain, if they are allowed, the *presence* of suffering in a world made by a perfectly good and wise Creator. But they do not explain why there should be so much, and such cruel, suffering, as we find in the world, so much of it, so far as we can see, of a kind which is merely crushing to its victims without being educative and disciplinary. Now I fully admit this fact. There is much terrible suffering in the world that we certainly cannot see to have any beneficent purpose at all. Why this should be so neither Christianity nor any conceivable religion or philosophy can explain. All attempts at explanation have only proved hopeless failures, so it would be a mockery to repeat them to the sufferer. But the question for us is not whether we can *see* wisdom and goodness behind all this suffering; it is whether the fact that the suffering is there *forbids* us to believe in the wisdom and the goodness. The very wording of the difficulty propounded to me speaks of *trusting* God. Now all trusting is trusting when you *cannot* see. When you *see* there is no occasion to trust. To say that I trust a man so far as I can see him is a familiar way of saying that I do not trust him at all. To trust God means that one holds fast to the conviction that His purpose with us is wise and good, not because it manifestly appears so, but *in spite* of

appearances to the contrary. And trust, not knowledge, is all the Christian can profess to have. But so much he is entitled to have, for we cannot *know* that there is not, behind the worst cruelties of life, a wisdom and goodness which will be justified when the whole upshot is known. And meanwhile, the Christian can fairly say that if his religion has not explained the presence of evil in the world—as it has not—it has done something much better. It has taught a noble army of the world's sufferers to bear the worst that life has to threaten with courage and serenity, and to do much more than this; it has taught them to 'turn their necessity to glorious gain' by making the hardest of afflictions into opportunities for the development of the rarest and finest graces of the spiritual life. That much is writ large in the history of countless Christian lives all through the ages, and may be true of our own lives if only we will live in the attitude of love and trust. Whether it is reasonable in the face of apparent facts to trust God cannot be decided by argument from any assumed set of 'axiomatic propositions'. The real test is to be found by considering the value of the kind of life which such trust has enabled men to lead. The true evidence of Christianity is to be found in the lives of the saints. They cannot 'account for' the evil in the world any more than the philosopher can; yet, time and again, they have faced it in its cruellest forms and have been found 'more than conquerors'.

A. E. TAYLOR

Why Should I Love God?

FROM the earliest times men have always wanted a god to worship. Either they made idols and bowed before them; or they went on to hill-tops and fell down before the sun and the stars and the thunder; or they filled the woods and mountains with familiar spirits; or else they invented gods in their own image, feeling and acting as they did themselves. They worshipped these gods, they feared them, they tried to put them in a good temper, they wondered at them. But it never entered their heads to love them. And even when the Jews made the great step forward, and brought into the world the worship of the One, Invisible, All-powerful God—even then, though they spoke of loving God and of God loving them, that love was a difficult and precarious relationship, which could be broken by sin or disloyalty on their part and by the resulting jealousy and anger on the part of God. Such love is a matter of bargaining, a business relationship; not a spontaneous warmth of the heart.

With two words Christ changed the whole attitude of man to God. 'Our Father'—that is how He said we were to pray to Him; to substitute for the relationship of master and slave that of father and son. And upon those words, and the prayer which follows them, and all Christ's teaching about God and the love of God, Christianity has built up a truer idea of what God is like and of our proper attitude to Him than man has ever been able to find elsewhere. And if you are really to be a Christian in something more than name only, then you must learn to love God; but you can only love God if you know something about Him.

Think first of God as the creator and preserver of the world. We believe that He *did* create it, and that it is not

all the work of chance; and we believe too that when He had created it He did not at once forget all about it and leave it to spin away to its end unregarded. We think of Him as knowing about the world as it is to-day and caring about it. We sometimes boast about man's inventions and achievements; but the tiniest flower or shell or insect is a greater miracle than anything man has done. Think of the world for a moment as a place full of these and greater miracles, created in their multitudes from day to day—preserved, protected, or destroyed by a Power which never pauses and which is never exhausted. Think of the beauties of nature; think of animals, with their speed, their strength, and their grace; and think last of all of man, the greatest of all created things. You yourself, in all you are or do or think or say, from the slightest movement of a muscle to the deepest thought of your heart, are altogether God's; created by Him, sustained by Him, living by His will and by His direction.

You cannot think for long about these things without feeling the overwhelming majesty and power of God. But in themselves, you might say, these things would not lead you to love Him; He is too terrible, too all-powerful, too far removed—so indeed it seems, at first. But look once more into your own heart, and try to sort out, among your own feelings, those which you know are your best feelings, those which are most worthy of you. There are times, even with the worst and unhappiest of us, when we feel uplifted, taken out of ourselves, made for a moment the inhabitants of a larger world. What are these times, and what is it in us that makes those experiences possible? We are perhaps overcome by the beauty of some scene in nature or by some work of man; or we are stirred by some story of brave deeds or heroic suffering; or we hear great music or watch a moving play or picture; or we feel a sudden rush of sympathy or affection; or in a rare moment we choose the difficult

right thing instead of the easy wrong thing and are happy; or perhaps happiness comes now and then flooding in upon us for no apparent cause at all. Now when things like these happen we know we are at our best—we are for the moment more like what God meant us to be. And always at such times it is love that moves us; it may be love of beauty in nature or in art; or love of a brave man; or love of fine sound or noble sentiment; or simple love for our friends and for those who love us; or love of what is good and pure and noble; or just love of the world as it lies about us. Love such as this is the greatest of our possessions. And where does it come from, if not from God? And if God has filled us with this power to love, and made it the noblest of our qualities, then surely He must Himself be a loving God; not merely a God who is ready to love us if we do right, and hate us when we do wrong, but a God who is our Father, who loves us whatever we may do, who is always waiting for us to turn to Him; glad when we are good and happy, sorry for our sins, sad at our unhappiness.

So much Christ taught us to see; again and again, in teaching and in story, he showed us that God is Love. But most of all He taught it by His life. Read again that story that the Gospels tell. Read it first of all as if were only the story of a man; and even so you will at the end feel that here is the hero you would wish to follow; never was there man so noble, so brave, so steadfast, so kind. And then remember that this carpenter's son, who gave up his life for his friends, who after two years spent in going about doing good died like a criminal on the cross, was none other than the Son of God—God Himself come down to earth to show His love for men. What can we do then but offer Him our love? It is a poor return for all that He has done and is doing for us, but it is, after all, the finest thing we have. Let us give it Him. We have done so little to deserve His love for us; we have betrayed

Him and been false to Him so often, and yet He has never turned away. How can we hold back and refuse Him the one thing He has asked, 'the love of our poor heart'?

And love involves trust. Life is often, it seems, cruel, difficult, unjust. We see our friends' distress and misfortunes, or we suffer the same ourselves; to many life seems a stony path indeed, to many whose goodness and innocence surely deserved fairer treatment. And often we are tempted to give up our belief in a just and merciful God, and our love withers and dies. But if this does happen, then it means our love was never very real. Remember two things; first that much of the misery and unhappiness from which we suffer is due to man's own folly or lack of understanding. God has given man a free hand; it is only by being given a free hand that we can develop out of the state of children. And if goodness is to be worth anything, then it must be made possible for man to reject the good and choose the evil. And so instead of accusing God we ought to bestir ourselves and see what we can do to help. Sometimes this seems to be the right explanation. And sometimes, too, we see that pain or unhappiness is after all the necessary pathway to a fuller and richer life. But we cannot, if we are honest, pretend that any explanation will really solve the problem of suffering and evil. It remains the greatest difficulty in the way of our loving God.

So I say, not only *love*, but *trust*. After all, we see only an infinitesimal part of God's creation, limited as we are in space and time. He is working His purpose out, but we can see only a tiny meaningless part of the great pattern. Let us give up trying to understand it, and look rather into our own hearts, where all hate and bitterness and resentment are but obstacles to the growth of that love which brings us near to God. And then our question will soon be no longer 'Why should I love God?', as if love

were a debt we were disinclined to pay; but rather 'How can I show my love for God?' The lives of the best men that the world has seen have simply been so many answers to that question.

P. HUGH B. LYON

What May We Pray For?

'PRAYER is pleasing to God, that is, the prayer which is undertaken in the proper manner. He therefore that desires to be heard should pray wisely, fervently, humbly, faithfully, perseveringly, confidently. Let him pray wisely, by which I mean, let him pray for those things which minister to the Divine glory and the salvation of his neighbours. God is all-powerful, therefore do not in your prayers prescribe how He shall act; He is all-wise, therefore do not determine when. Do not let your prayers break forth heedlessly, but let them follow the guidance of faith, remembering that faith has steady regard to the Divine word. Those things, therefore, which God promises absolutely in His word, those pray for absolutely. Those which He promises conditionally—for example, temporal things—those on the same principle pray for conditionally. Those things which He does not promise at all, those also you will not pray for at all. God often grants in His anger what His goodness would deny. Therefore, follow Christ, who fully conforms His will to the will of God.' So wrote the Lutheran Gerhard in his *Holy Meditations*. Prayer is a form of intelligent correspondence with the revealed will of God. This is the thought we are to continually have in mind when we attempt to answer the often repeated question, What ought we to pray for?

Confining ourselves first of all to the practical aspect of the subject, we may put our answer under four heads:

1. The main object of our prayers must be spiritual things. If we are to pray in the name of Christ, we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is the lesson of the Lord's Prayer. Nor can we omit to notice, that if in one Gospel it is said that 'Father

in 'Heaven will give good things to them that ask Him', the good things are described in another Gospel as 'the Holy Spirit'.¹ For so far as we are Christians in heart it is upon the possession of the Spirit, with all that that implies, that our desires are concentrated for ourselves and others. For this we can pray with certainty, with the certainty that our persevering prayers for ourselves and others will be heard and answered in proportion to our faith. I say answered for ourselves and others: not that God will force the wills of others any more than our own, but that our prayers can secure for them at least the offers of the Divine love. This is the region in which our Lord's promise is specially true, 'Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it.'² Our Lord spoke in a figure, but it was a figure familiar to Jewish hearers. The mountain is the mountain of the world-power which hinders the spiritual spread of the kingdom of God in our own hearts and in the world. This is the moral obstacle which the prayer of the Church, in proportion to its reality and to the unity with which it is offered, shall be able to remove. 'What art thou, O great mountain?' the prophet Zechariah had said of old, 'before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.'³

It is then for spiritual things, for the manifestation of spiritual power in the hearts of men, that we are chiefly and primarily to pray. Nor is it easy to overrate the importance of this right direction of our prayers. True it may be (to take the converse of the Lord's illustration) that even if we ask our Father for a stone He will still give us bread, or for a scorpion, He will give us fish,⁴ but we cannot expect this to be the case where we have the

¹ Matt. vii. 11 compared with Luke xi. 13.

² Mark xi. 23.

³ Zech. iv. 7.

⁴ Matt. vii. 9.

opportunities of better knowledge; rather, if we pray amiss, let us fear the judgement: 'God gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their souls.'¹ Nor must we omit to notice that in controversies raised by materialists about the efficacy of prayer, this characteristic of Christian prayer has generally been left out of sight. It has been proposed that we should have experiments to test the efficacy of prayer in regard to the long life of kings, or the recovery of the sick. But nothing can be more certain than this, that prayer is meant to be an exercise of faith which cannot be subjected in our present life to external testing. And that chiefly because it is in the region of character, in the region where results only fully appear in the eternal world, that prayer is to find its most assured and definite answer.

2. But not all spiritual boons can be asked for. What is asked for must be in accordance with the Divine will. Thus, to ask (as many people do) that they may escape sin, when they will not take reasonable precautions to avoid the occasions of temptation; or to pray for our children, without taking any proper pains in regard to their education; or to pray for spiritual graces, while we refuse the means which the Divine will has appointed for their reception; or to pray for forgiveness for ourselves, when we will neither forgive others nor accept the punishment of our own sins—these are all examples of the way in which we may pray for spiritual things lawlessly, or without reference to the will of God.

3. But it cannot be doubted that we may pray also for physical things. They must hold the subordinate place that is given them in the Lord's Prayer, but that place they must hold—a lesser place than was given them in the Old Testament, but still a place. A certain supply of physical things, our daily bread, is necessary to enable us and others to do the work of God in the world; *Give us,*

¹ Ps. cvi. 15.

we pray, *our daily bread*. And that petition can be taken to cover prayers for health of body, and bettering of social conditions, and favourable weather. Only we can never pray for these physical blessings with the same security or absoluteness as for spiritual. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' Everything that is included in daily bread He finally denied to His own Son. To Him He finally gave no physical deliverance in this life, but left Him in the extremest sense without physical support. This is the profound lesson which we learn about prayer from the prayer of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. So clearly supreme are spiritual over physical things as objects of prayer, that physical things can only be prayed for conditionally—'Father, if it be possible'; and may be denied even to the well-beloved, even as the cup did not pass from Christ without His drinking it. Still, granted this, there are a great number of physical things which, as far as the Christian in this world can see, it would be good for him or others to have, such as health, supply of food, weather, and so on. In regard to these we should put up real petitions, which, if accompanied with a willingness to see them not granted, or prefaced by 'Not my will, but Thine be done', should still be prayers which expect an answer from the Divine love. It is the great function of the spiritual man to see to it, that within that region where the human will has its exercise, spiritual motives and forces shall have their full sway in determining events; and for all we know the Divine government of the world may, for testing of our faith, have left a real function for prayer to fulfil in reinforcing the springs of vitality in sick men, and even in ordering, within certain limits, the character of the weather.

4. I say, 'for all we know', and I am looking at the matter now practically, not in a supernatural way. How do we know the Divine will? We know it from the revelation in conscience and through Christ. We know it also

in the order of the physical world. Science has recently been disclosing increasingly what the order of the physical world is, what its laws are. Like the revealed laws of the spiritual kingdom, the known physical laws are limits to prayer. No doubt from time to time prophets and righteous men have been specially inspired to pray for miracles. With such exceptional inspirations we are not now concerned. Ordinarily, a known law of the physical world is a declaration of the will of God. So far, therefore, as the physical laws of the world are known, so far as scientific men can prophesy what will happen in accordance with these laws, to pray against them would be to pray against God. But there is a region into which human foreknowledge cannot penetrate. We know, indeed, that it belongs to the fixed order of nature that we should not have tropical weather in a temperate climate, but within limits there is no fixed order in the sequence of different kinds of weather which is known to us. It is certainly true that men, by planting or destroying trees, can in lapse of time modify weather. Nor can it be said to be certain, from a scientific point of view, that the action of free will by means of prayer may not have a similar power within similar limits to modify the weather—conceivably through the mediation of invisible spiritual forces or persons, as to which we know nothing. We doubt very much whether those scientific men who will be most decisive in denying this, will be prepared to admit that there is such a thing at all as a real freedom within certain restricted limits, assigned to human wills in ordering the course of physical events; or that we can, by exercise of our free wills, make the course of events different from what it otherwise would have been. Granted there is this freedom, for example, to modify weather by planting trees or accumulating waters, there can be no scientific demonstration that prayer may not have a similar restricted but real influence.

Christians will certainly go on trustfully commending their wishes about the weather to their Heavenly Father's attention, as well as the health of their friends, until science has got a power, altogether different from what it now wields, of predicting future events in these districts of experience. For only such power of prediction would make it apparent that in these, as in the vaster physical movements, events are simply determined in accordance with physical laws, without any reference to moral or spiritual causes. And if this seems already certain to me of physical science, on the other hand, the spiritual experience of men of prayer has in all ages given them great encouragement in praying for the recovery of their friends and for seasonable weather.

In this paper I have trespassed very slightly on the speculative ground, and my main object was to give a practical answer to the question, What are the proper objects of prayer? To deal at length with the philosophic or scientific problem would require more space than is at present at my command, and more knowledge. But the broad position of the Christian is this, and in occupying it he stands on the strongest ground. It is the business of the spiritual man to assert, within certain limits, the mastery of the human spirit in accordance with the Divine will over its material surroundings. It does this mainly through the strengthening of character. It does it in part through altering external conditions. How far the power allowed to the human spirit extends into the material world cannot be certainly said, but limits can only be assigned to it with certainty at that point where science can prove the importance of human freedom by predictions of the course of events on a basis purely physical; and the power of prayer may be commensurate with the power of the human spirit. If we can alter circumstances by willing and working, we may alter them also by willing and praying. But we must not conclude

this discussion without repeating that the main objects of Christian prayer are spiritual things. Only in regard to these can prayer rise with the confident expectation of being answered.

CHARLES GORE

Does God really take any Notice of Our Prayers?

THERE are two kinds of people in the world, those who believe in prayer and those who do not. Those who do not believe in it as a rule argue that they have given it up, because it does not work. No doubt, in their case, they are right. They have made requests which have not been answered. But it does not seem to have occurred to them that if they had made different requests they might have been answered. The following story will make this point clear.

There was once a man who had three sons. The eldest of them came to him and said: 'Dad, please give me a shilling. I think I have "spotted a winner" and I want to put a bob on it.' His father shook his head. Then the second son came in and said: 'Dad, please give me a shilling.' 'What do you want it for, my boy?' said his father. 'I want to buy some sweets.' 'And what are you going to do with them?' 'Why, eat them of course,' the boy replied. 'What? all of them?' 'Yes, all of them,' said the boy. The father again shook his head. After a time the youngest son came running into the room, and said: 'Dad, do please give me a shilling.' 'Why do you want it?' said his father. 'I want to buy a present for Tommy Brown. He has had an accident and broken his leg.' With a kindly smile the father pulled out the money and gave it to him. 'Ye ask and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your (selfish) pleasures,' says St. James in his epistle.

When people accuse God of not taking any notice of our prayers, they overlook the great danger of unwise giving, which in human life is far too common. A great many parents, for example, 'spoil' their children by

always giving them what they want. God never does that. If God (who is all-powerful) always gave us what we asked, the result would be simply disastrous. Under those circumstances, no wise person would ever dare to ask God for anything, lest it might prove to be his undoing.

We read in the Bible that the two sons of Zebedee came to our Lord and said, 'Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall ask of Thee. . . . Grant that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand in Thy glory.' Our Lord's reply was, 'Ye know not what ye ask.' Indeed they did not. Our Lord's throne was a cross, 'and with Him they crucified two thieves, one on his right hand and the other on his left'.

But if God does not give what people ask, but only what is best for them, why, then, does He trouble them to ask at all? Why does He not simply give them what is best for them, and have done with it? To this question it is not very difficult to find the answer. It is found in that often quoted, and often misunderstood, saying: 'Heaven helps those that help themselves.' This, rightly interpreted, means that God has no use for laziness. He expects men to work for what they receive. Thus, for example, God might have made the world so that the fruits of the earth dropped into man's lap without any effort on his part. This is not the case. Man has to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. He has to work for what he gets, and one form of that work is prayer. In prayer we co-operate with God. In so doing, our characters develop, and we gain increasing insight into the mind of God. In this way we become fitted gradually to receive God's best gifts, which He is waiting to give us. This, at any rate, is the experience of those who persevere in prayer.

But it is important to remember that there is a right

and a wrong way of co-operating with God. It is *His* will and not our own that we are seeking to carry out. Many people make the disastrous mistake of supposing that prayer is an attempt to change the will of God. The will of God, however, is the best thing in the world. Nobody in his senses would think of trying to change it. We pray not in order to change it, but to range ourselves on the side of it. 'Our wills are ours to make them thine.' All prayer, therefore, should be unselfish and God-centred. That is the meaning of the ending 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord'. This is not a magical formula which will ensure our getting what we ask. We use it at the end of our prayers in order to show that we have honestly tried to pray such prayers as Christ would approve. Hence we can dare 'to use His name'.

It follows from this that we should never forget the most unselfish of all forms of prayer, namely intercession, or prayer for others. The Lord's Prayer teaches us not to say 'my' and 'me' but 'our' and 'us'. Especially should we pray for our friends. If we wish to be true friends we owe it to them that we regularly remember them in this way, particularly if they are the kind of people who need help in matters of religion, as so many do. In this way we shall confer upon them the greatest blessing in the world, and that is the blessing of a Christian friendship. While all friendship is good, there is no friendship to equal that.

So far we have spoken of prayer as if it consisted only in asking for things. But, of course, it is far more than that. Obviously, this must be so, if God is our Father. No self-respecting son would approach his father only when he wanted to get something out of him, though there are a good many people who treat their Heavenly Father so. Let us not be like them. We shall often approach Him in prayer in order to thank Him, and also to talk to Him about what is in our hearts. At times we shall be content to kneel in silence before Him, waiting

for Him to speak to us. The more we get to know God, the less will our prayers be a string of petitions, and the more will they be like a conversation with a friend. We shall not then be in any doubt that God listens to our prayers. We shall be convinced of it from our own experiences. That is the only way in which we can be convinced.

Let us sum up. If we want to know whether God takes any notice of our prayers, we can only find the answer in one way, by experience. But we must pray in the right way. We must not be selfish in our prayers, but rather seek always to make them pleasing to Him. And we must persevere. Many people give up just when a little more patience and perseverance would have saved the situation. *Never give up your private prayers.*

LINDSAY DEWAR

Can you Prove that Jesus Lived: Historically?

I HAVE been asked to write something in answer to this question. The first thing I should say is 'What kind of proof do you want?' If you want the sort of proof you can have for a mathematical truth, or for a scientific law which can be submitted to experiment, you can't have that kind of proof for any historical event. You can invent, if you have sufficient ingenuity, a theory to account for the documents relating to any character in history on the supposition that the person never really lived, a theory which does not involve any sheer physical impossibility, even if it involves wild improbabilities. Archbishop Whately wrote in 1819 a skit entitled *Historic Doubts relating to Napoleon Buonaparte*, in which he showed that this could be done even in regard to a famous man still alive. Historical proof is a matter of greater or less probability, and when you come to estimate what is probable, in view of the documentary evidence, it is the judgement of the person who is familiar with that particular field which counts. Anybody who has not had the opportunity of studying that field may come up against arguments making out that something is probable which an expert, who does know the field, can see to be worth nothing.

No one would ever raise the question 'Can you prove that Jesus lived?' unless there had been people who claimed to show that it was improbable that He ever lived. Now anybody who hears an anti-Christian lecturer at a street corner declare that the documentary evidence makes it improbable that Jesus ever lived, can't hope to judge by his own untrained judgement what is probable or improbable in regard to documents of

nineteen hundred years ago. He has to take as probable what the body of scholarly opinion regards as probable, and thus he is impressed by the lecturer's statement, so far as he believes that the body of scholarly opinion supports the view that Jesus never lived. If that is what the lecturer tries to make his audience believe, he is either ignorant himself of what scholarly opinion as a whole really is, or he is consciously imposing upon his hearers' credulity. There have, it is true, been a few writers in recent times, though not scholars of the highest rank, who have maintained that Jesus never lived, but all those recognized as the chief authorities in this part of ancient history have treated such a view as utterly absurd. It has never been the view of more than a few cranks, like the view that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. If it was only Christians who maintained that Jesus lived, you might say that their judgement was warped by their preconceived belief, and so I point to two men who have written from a standpoint quite apart from the Christian one, and stand in the first rank as authorities on ancient history. One is the great German historian, Eduard Meyer, who died the other day, the chief ancient historian of our time. One of his latest books was a history of the origins of Christianity, and not only did he believe that Jesus was a real man in history, but he put a high value upon our Gospels as historical documents showing what Jesus was like. The second man is Sir James Frazer, whose special subject is those worships of mythical saviour gods on which people who try to make the story of Jesus mythical mainly build. What does Sir James Frazer himself say?

'The doubts which have been cast on the historical reality of Jesus are, in my judgment, *unworthy of serious attention*. Quite apart from the positive evidence of history and tradition, the origin of a great religious and moral reform is inexplicable without the personal existence of a great Reformer.

To dissolve the Founder of Christianity into a myth, as some would do, is hardly less absurd than it would be to do the same for Mohammed, Luther, and Calvin. Such dissolving views are for the most part the dreams of students who know the great world chiefly through its pale reflection in books.¹

One may give an example how an argument which may seem strong to some one who does not know the facts is really worthless. A great deal is made by street-corner lecturers of the fact that in all the Greek and Roman writings coming down from the first century, other than the writings of Christians, there is no mention of Jesus. That may be quite true, but the argument leaves out of account that what we possess to-day of the writings of the first century are mere scraps and relics, and that those who wrote for the educated Greek and Roman public would have thought it below the dignity of history to notice the doings and sayings of a wandering preacher among one of the conquered peoples of the Empire. What they wrote about was wars and politics and the doings of emperors and kings. Let us think of a modern analogy. Suppose that all the printed writing of to-day had perished, except Mr. Winston Churchill's *History of the World War*, Mr. Bernard Shaw's books, and some hundred odd issues of *The Morning Post*. What mention would one find in these writings of the Sadhu Sundar Singh? Who, you ask, was the Sadhu Sundar Singh? Well, there you are! You don't know of him, any more than thousands of people in the Roman world of the first century knew about Jesus, and yet the Sadhu has been a very real man of our time. Multitudes in India have regarded him with reverence; many men have followed him. Miraculous stories have been connected with him. If, in some future age, a book about the Sadhu² happened to survive

¹ *The Golden Bough*, pt. vi, p. 412.

² See *The Sadhu*, by Canon B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy. Macmillan & Co.

alongside of the other writings just mentioned, would it be reasonable to say that the Sadhu Sundar Singh was a myth because there was no mention of him in Mr. Winston Churchill's *History of the World War* or Mr. Bernard Shaw's books or in the hundred odd numbers of *The Morning Post*?

There is one misunderstanding which must be guarded against. If historical evidence can never yield more than greater or less probability, does belief in Jesus, it may be asked, stand on a mere probability, and that a probability the strength of which can be estimated only by experts accustomed to deal with a particular class of documents? The answer to this question might be Yes, if Jesus were a character in past history and nothing more. If there had never been any Christian Church, and to-day we discovered the Gospels in some old library, we might have no more than a probability that the Person shown in these books had really lived among men. But Jesus is much more than a character in past history. He has been continuously active in the society of men called His 'Church'. Men throughout the ages have been in contact with Jesus as a living Person. Thus for those whom Jesus saves what might otherwise be only an historical probability becomes a certainty of faith.

EDWYN BEVAN

*What Evidence has the Church for calling
Christ God? Why call Him more than
a Fine Man?*

THIS question plainly concerns the very heart and soul of our religion. All historians would agree that it is not in the admiration of Jesus as a fine man but in the linking together of His name with the name of God that the strength and power of the Christian religion have always lain.

The linking together of the two names is something that arose directly out of the earliest impressions made by Jesus Christ upon those who knew Him in the flesh—something, moreover, that formed itself in the minds of a multitude of simple men and women before it was ever reflected upon by a learned theologian or discussed by any official gathering of the Church. When the theologians *did* begin to reflect upon it and the Church councils to discuss it, they had no doubt that just here—in the association of the names of God and Christ—lay the deepest truth of the Christian faith. Yet they were keenly aware that the nature of this association might be open to all sorts of misunderstandings, and in council after council, and treatise after treatise, they did everything in their power to define precisely what the Church meant by calling Christ God and to distinguish it from a great many other things which the Church did *not* mean.

Perhaps, then, if we do our best to understand what the Church meant by calling Christ God, we shall find it much easier to do so ourselves. On the whole the Early Church had very seldom to deal with people who refused to link up the name of Christ with the name of God at all or who believed the whole truth about Him to be that He was 'a fine man'. It was much more troubled by people

who represented the directly opposite opinion, holding that He was *simply* a divine being and not a real man at all. And it always showed itself quite as eager to defend the very manhood of Christ as it was to defend His very Godhead. In the formula prepared for the Council of Chalcedon in the year A.D. 451 and which has ever since been regarded as the standard statement of the matter, it is declared that Christ is 'of one substance with the Father as regards His divinity, and of one substance with us as regards His humanity'. We must remember this very carefully. And we must be particularly careful not to ask the question 'What evidence has the Church for calling Christ God?' in such a way as to show we are forgetting that the Church has always placed equal emphasis on the fact that He was a man—and (as was particularly insisted on) a man not only in *appearance*, or in *bodily form*, or in *respect of only a part of human nature*, but a real human being, sharing everything in our nature except the sinfulness which distorts it, 'tempted and tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin'. It is therefore important to remember that such an expression as 'the divinity of Christ' does not claim to be more than half of the truth and that the other half of the truth is 'the humanity of Christ'.

It has often seemed to me, however, that the difficulties men feel nowadays about the linking together of the names of God and Christ arise not from a wrong view of Christ so much as from a wrong view of God. If this is so, then the question to which we must really address ourselves is, What do we mean by God? When we are not thinking keenly and vitally, we are very apt to let our minds slip into the thought of God as a very powerful and influential person who lives somewhere in the sky. But if we think of God in that way, then the doctrine of the incarnation becomes nonsensical. Of course, if the Christian doctrine were that Jesus of Nazareth was simply

God, or a God, walking the earth, then the difficulty would not be so great; for then we should simply be asked to believe that the God who ordinarily lives somewhere in the skies, came down to earth for these thirty-three years. But that is not the doctrine of the incarnation at all! There is *no* incarnation in that doctrine! The Christian doctrine is that in One who was really a man, and who never ceased to be a real man, God was nevertheless plainly present. What then do we mean by God? Well, we mean something much more august, something much more important, something much more deeply mysterious (much *more* mysterious and yet I should say much *less* puzzling) than just some very powerful being who lives somewhere in the sky. We mean something much more like the ultimate heart and secret of *all* being. We mean One who is Himself the final reality of things, One from whom all other being and reality flow. What then is the Church saying when it says that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself'? It is saying that it finds the final secret of things, the key and clue to the very inmost heart of reality, in that life of redeeming and suffering love that was lived out in the land of Palestine nearly two thousand years ago by Jesus the son of Mary, and above all in that death that He died upon the Cross. As it looks upon that life and that death it finds there, *as nowhere else*, the ultimate mystery of the universe and the ultimate meaning of all it contains (and not least the ultimate meaning of our human life) plainly revealed. In this *man*, in His advent and deeds of love, in His passion and in His crucifixion, it has found *God*—God challenging man's obedience, rebuking his sin, and then going out to meet him even in his sinfulness and reconciling him unto Himself.

What *evidence* has the Church for finding God here? I should reply that it has something much better than mere evidence. Or, if you prefer, it has the evidence of direct

encounter. What *evidence* have I for finding beauty in the songs of Shakespeare or in the symphonies of Beethoven? Just as it is not by any will or choice of mine, but by the compulsion of the beauty itself, that I find beauty in poetry or in music, so it is not by any will or choice of mine that I find God in Christ. No, I do not find Him: He finds me. He faces me with a challenge which, indeed, I have (if I must confess it) often done my best to escape, but which I cannot really escape. It would be nothing but an evasion, were I to say that I can read the Gospel story and stand before Christ's Cross without finding my life challenged as only the Eternal God has any right to challenge it. That is why I must confess, with the Church throughout all the ages, that God was in Christ.

JOHN BAILLIE

*Where the Four Gospels don't Agree, Which
One are We to Believe?*

BEHIND this question lies a deeper question: Why are there four gospels at all? In reality there is only one Gospel, that is, one revelation of God through the Lord Jesus Christ; indeed the title for each of these four books was 'The Gospel according to So-and-so'. Why then did the Church keep four? Would not one record of the Gospel have been sufficient, say, that of Luke, who claims to have studied his many predecessors? Our four, and our four alone, were retained because it was believed that they were either written or inspired by apostles of the Lord Jesus; thus even Mark was not dropped, although most of it had been embodied in Matthew and Luke, since it was supposed to incorporate reminiscences of Peter. While the common title of the books was 'The Gospel', or good news, to each was added 'according to Matthew, Mark, &c.', as the case might be, the idea being to stress the common message and the unity of faith in all four, despite their varieties and idiosyncrasies. But even so difficulties were soon felt, such as we feel to-day, owing to the juxtaposition of treatises which had originally circulated in separate circles of the Church. Christians who noticed the repetitions, the more or less serious discrepancies, and the omissions, endeavoured to solve such perplexities in various ways, none of which was more notable than the effort of a Syrian scholar called Tatian, in the second century, to compile a harmony or single Gospel, which actually was used by the Syrian Church, in preference to the four, for over two centuries. When people had such a smooth fusion of the gospel stories, they were obviously freed from any of the embarrassing difficulties which to-day start the question,

'Where the four gospels differ, which are we to believe?' As we cannot take Tatian's short cut, we have to answer that question as best we may.

One or two general principles of literary and historical criticism must be borne in mind, if the answer is to be rightly sought.

(a) You cannot answer it simply by counting heads, three or two against one. This is no case of four independent witnesses, as used to be thought. Thus Mark (and I use these four names for the sake of convenience in referring to the four) was known to Matthew and to Luke—that is, Mark practically as we have it. John was familiar with some of the traditions incorporated in the other and earlier three, even if he did not know any or all of them. Hence, what occurs in two or more may really go back to one.

(b) Neither can you appeal to one gospel invariably against or above the other three. Though Mark was the earliest, this does not imply that it covered all the ground. Rich traditions about Jesus were current in the primitive Church, which were not accessible to the writer or which he passed over as irrelevant to his particular purpose; because they only occur in a later narrative, this does not necessarily prove that they were less authentic or reliable. A touch or tradition may not be inferior simply because it is preserved in a source outside Mark. While Mark underlies the others, it did not reap the entire field; thus we cannot infer that because something occurs in Mark alone, it is therefore superior in value to material harvested in one or more of the other three.

(c) Again, the omission of a story or saying in one gospel does not prove in every case that the writer disbelieved it. For books in the ancient world were limited in size; if a writer did not require certain material for his own interpretation, he might leave it out in order to make room for fresh data. Thus Luke in all likelihood

omitted, for want of space, one entire section of Mark (vi. 45-viii. 26).

(d) On the other hand, Mark frequently does preserve a version which is not so much affected by later tradition. In deciding which account is preferable, at any given point, we may safely assign the Marcan version more weight, since it gives a more original reflection of what was actually said or done; it seems often to be more naïve, less conscious of literary and religious purpose than the other three, and therefore it may be held to represent more accurately upon the whole the content of the primitive testimony.

Such considerations hint that there is no rough-and-ready method of arranging the four gospels in order of merit, for our purpose. They are all more or less books made out of books; behind them lie literary sources already used by different circles in the Church, which were drawn up as well as used by preachers or teachers. More than that, behind and around even these sources lay the oral tradition, in which nothing was committed to writing. Now the Oriental memory was extraordinarily retentive, but, under the breath of a fresh faith, it could be imaginative, and traditions were shaped, embroidered, and recast for the purposes of edification. Stories might be amplified, heightened, and idealized in the light of faith. Besides, every writer of a gospel had his own interests. None set out to be an impartial biographer of Jesus. Not that this makes them less trustworthy, for any record of history has a purpose behind it; stories have generally a case to represent; the presence of a motive or of motives does not necessarily invalidate the account, it merely suggests the line to be taken in weighing what is recorded, especially when this can be compared with another version. Luke's sympathies, aims, and interests were not quite the same as those of Matthew, for instance. In each case, the writer told his story, selecting the

material, arranging it, and shaping it for his spécial purpose. It is only by appreciating such prepossessions and characteristics, as well as the unconscious prepossessions of faith with a story to tell, that we moderns can arrive at a balance between the various traditions lying in our four gospels.

The bearing of these general principles may best be shown by applying them to definite cases. Take one or two concrete illustrations.

(i) When did Jesus purge the temple in Jerusalem? John says, at the beginning of his ministry; the other three put it at the end. Good scholars have made out a case for John's dating, which deserves consideration. However this may be, it illustrates (*a*); the point is that you cannot decide simply by counting three against one, you must weigh the likelihood of one or the other tradition being a deliberate alteration of the other, and ask, in the light of internal evidence, which? This evidence is the general character of the gospel or gospels in question.

(ii) Again, when were the first disciples called by Jesus? Mark and Matthew put this, as an abrupt summons, in Galilee; John suggests that Jesus had already met the four disciples at the revival mission of John the Baptist in Judea. It is not impossible that John's tradition preserves an historical truth, since psychologically it explains the apparently sudden call to the apostleship later on. This illustrates (*b*), for it is likely that Jesus did more work in Judea than any evangelist realized till John.

(iii) When did Jesus utter parables like the Grain of Mustard-seed and the Woman with the Leaven? Matthew inserts them in a long address, among other parables; Luke makes Jesus tell these two stories (which we call parables) in a moment of enthusiasm, after his healing of a crippled woman had impressed the crowd

(xiii. 10-20). The latter setting is more likely. It is not that we can hope to ascertain the precise time and place at which Jesus said certain words; and, like a true teacher, he would often repeat his sayings. But Matthew, with catechetical interests, liked to group sayings in large sections which, we may be reasonably sure, are artificial, whereas the more natural occasion seems in this particular case to be that indicated by Luke. Why Mark omitted the second and John both of these stories is indicated in (b) and (c); John indeed has no parables such as the other three record.

Finally (iv) the truth of (d) is shown by the answer of Jesus to the disciples when they wondered why he did not stay at Capernaum. Mark makes him explain that he had a wider mission throughout the country (i. 37, 38); Luke (iv. 42, 43) thinks it was because he had been 'sent' from heaven—a true, and a deep, explanation, but plainly less appropriate in this connexion. Again, in the parable of the wicked vinedressers, Mark tells naturally how they murdered the owner's son and then flung him outside the vineyard; Matthew and Luke, impressed by the details of the crucifixion which took place outside the city, make the vinedressers throw the son outside first and then kill him. The preference in a case like this clearly is in favour of Mark.

These illustrations may serve to indicate how careful we have to be in weighing the evidence before we answer our question. There is no rigid rule. Which gospel we are to believe depends at any point upon a comparative judgement of several. Especially in considering discrepancies within the narratives of the crucifixion and the appearances after death, we ought to appreciate the creative as well as the reproductive tendencies of the writers, the ethos of each gospel, and the connexion between them, if any. How far was one correcting the other? How far was one developing a theme of his own,

independently? Each gospel, even that of Mark, has its particular interests, its way of putting things, its reason for representing certain facts, or what seem to be facts, thus and not otherwise. All this does not necessarily mean that the testimony is lowered in value, as I have already hinted. Luke's interest in prayer and in women, for instance, might make him more specially alive to preserve stories and sayings about such matters; it need not follow that he invented them, any more than Matthew did in bringing out the prophetic opposition of Jesus to the Jewish authorities, which did not happen to appeal so much to Luke. The point is, that we must take these and other factors into account as we decide between one line or item of tradition and another.

Such a process of examination may seem round-about and hesitating, but it is only by this patient, frank, searching study of the records in their divergencies that one can reach an appreciation of the common faith which they attest. The four gospels turn out to be records, not only of the faith which they imply but of the Person who evoked that faith. Sometimes we cannot be sure how this or that happened; but as a rule we realize that something did happen, even though it is not told in ways that convince us as they convinced the earliest readers, that something was said, even though it has come down in different versions. The more thorough, unprejudiced, and honest we are in facing the differences, major and minor, the more likely we are to be sensible that underneath them there is an historical basis sufficient for faith. In other words, if we ask, why are there differences in the four gospels? the answer is not that each of them is representing a different Jesus, but that it is the same Jesus; only, the truth about Him did not pass fully into any one of them, and it is part of our discipline to use them, with perfectly candid minds, in order to see Him for ourselves as these early writers saw His reality for themselves and

for their age. In practising this study, most people discover that when the four gospels differ, they are not driven to disbelieve all of them, but to find that in one or another there is trustworthy evidence for a reasonable faith.

JAMES MOFFATT

What was Christ's Position as God, if He prayed to God?

WE can answer the question, in the form in which it is stated, thus: When Jesus prayed to God, His position as God was that He was God the Son, in the manhood which He had taken, praying to God the Father, and that Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit, are the one sole and supreme God, within Whose being love thus finds its supreme expression. For God is love.

But Christians did not learn this language of theology all at once. It was about four hundred years before the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were worked out into a form which was satisfactory. In the days when Jesus lived with his fisherman-friends in Galilee, these careful doctrinal phrases had not been invented. The little circle of His followers knew Him as a man, and knew Him with a close intimacy which makes their testimony to His purity of motive and of living, to His love and His courage, to His sureness of touch when He dealt with sin or with sickness, both remarkable and convincing. It was unquestionably a human life in every way, with all the difficulties and responsibilities and temptations that men have to face. And we know that He did not find temptation easy to meet. The struggle in the wilderness after His baptism was long and hard. The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when all His human nature shrank from the tragic strain of betrayal and crucifixion, was even harder. Yet He never failed, as we all fail. He won His victory, and won it as a man, and so He won it for us.

But prayer is a natural part of human life. It has been said that 'man is a praying animal'. Certainly it is true that always and everywhere men have prayed to the gods that they knew. And even those who have ceased to

believe in God, and who call themselves atheists, have often found themselves, in time of great happiness, or of great need, wanting to cry out, either in praise and thanksgiving, or in longing and entreaty, to the Unseen, whom they do not know. It is thus that Mr. Bertrand Russell, one of the most distinguished scholars and writers of our time, who finds himself utterly unable to believe in God as Christians believe in Him, can yet write of 'A free man's worship'.

What do we know about the prayers of Jesus? It is clear enough that He prayed regularly, and we are told that it was His custom to go to the synagogue and to join in the regular services there, with their beautiful prayers drawn from the Old Testament. Sometimes He would try to escape from the crowds that followed Him everywhere, and to go away to the top of some hill where He could be quiet and pray. On one occasion at least He rose very early in the morning in order to pray. And He told His followers to pray at all times, and to pray persistently. When He was in sore distress, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He sought for a solitary place where He could face the last great crisis of His mission in prayer. In all this He prayed as men pray, and if this had been all, we could have said of Him that He was such an one as are the saints of every religion. But there was something more, something so striking that it has changed man's idea of prayer for all time.

Can we see just what this was, this special mark or note in His praying which led His disciples to ask Him to teach them His own way of prayer? The disciples were already religious men. They were accustomed to the worship of the synagogue, and some at least of them had been followers of John the Baptist, who, as they told Jesus, had taught his disciples his own way of prayer. Why did they want anything more of Jesus? We can see the answer in the teaching about prayer which Jesus gave them,

teaching so familiar to us now that we find it hard to realize how new and striking it was. And we must remember that this teaching puts into words for them and for us the actual prayer of Jesus Himself.

In the first place, He taught them to pray to the Father with quite astonishing directness and simplicity. St. Luke has preserved for us what seems to be the earliest form of the Lord's Prayer, and it begins, perfectly naturally, and almost intimately, 'Father, hallowed be Thy name'. But this was just the way in which He prayed Himself. In speaking to God He could speak as though there were no barriers at all. He could come when He would and talk freely, as a child can come to a loving and understanding father or mother. Indeed He spoke to God even more freely, since no father or mother understands as fully as God understands. But this was something quite new, quite unlike the straining after God to which man had been accustomed. Some of His enemies said, in astonishment, that He talked 'as though God were His own Father, putting Himself on a level with God'. And thinking it all over afterwards, that is exactly the claim which the disciples made for Him.

In the second place He spoke of prayer as quite certain to be heard and answered. 'Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' We may not always receive exactly what we ask, for we do not always know what is best, for others or for ourselves. But the giving of God is better and not worse than that of an earthly father. 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.' And so He Himself prayed as one perfectly sure not only that He was heard, but that He was answered. Even in Gethsemane He did not need many

words. He laid His need before the Father, wholly ready to accept the Father's will for Him, whatever that will might be: 'If this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.'

In such prayer as this men saw what perfect prayer might be. But that meant that they saw God as He really is, wholly loving in His Fatherhood, and that they saw in Jesus One who knew and had shown them the way to God. Thus they came to think of Jesus as One who, though He was so truly and fully man, was more than any man that had ever lived, for He had opened up the way for which men had always been seeking. Through Him they had learned the way up to God Himself. And so at last they came to see that Jesus had done something that only God can do, for it could only be by God's own act that God is made known. What else then could Jesus be save God Himself, revealing in manhood both the truth of God and the truth of man? He could not have been so wholly and perfectly all that man at his highest might be, if God had not acted. And so, as St. John put it, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

And so in the prayers of Jesus, it was as man that He prayed to God the Father. But that prayer revealed a deeper truth still, the truth of that mystery of love within the being of God Himself, wherewith the Father loves the Son, and the Son returns that love, in an eternal response which gives meaning to all our lesser prayers. And that is why we so often end our prayers with the words 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'. Not only has He taught us to pray as He prayed when He lived among us as a man, but now and always, in the eternal unity of the Godhead, 'He ever liveth, to make intercession for us'.

L. W. GRENSTED

*If Christ was God, How did God look
after the World while Christ was in
Palestine?*

OUR best way of dealing with this question will be by working it into a kind of dramatic story or dialogue.

The scene is a Mission-House in India, in a village not far from Delhi; and the dialogue takes place about Christmas, 1911. An Indian boy, who is being prepared for Christian Baptism, is talking to the missionary, asking him some questions about Jesus.

Boy. Is the Holy Land, where Jesus lived, a real place on earth?

Missionary. Yes, of course it is. Quite a tiny little country, compared with India. It is the country that we usually call Palestine. Anybody can go and visit it, and see the places where Jesus lived and taught and died. I've been there myself.

Boy. How long did Jesus live there?

Missionary. All his life on earth—or very nearly. That is, more than thirty years.

Boy. But who was looking after the rest of the world all that time?

Missionary. What do you mean by that?

Boy. Well, if Christ was God, how could God be ruling in heaven while He was living as a man in Palestine? And who *was* ruling over the universe during those thirty years?

Missionary. What made you think of that?

Boy. Last Sunday's lesson. It was the Christmas story, about God coming down to earth, and beginning as a little child. And then I thought of King George's visit to India. I saw him here with my own eyes a fortnight ago. And I wondered how he could get away from London,

where he has to rule over the British Empire. Who is governing the British Empire just now, while King George is away from London and is travelling in India? That was another question I wanted to ask.

Missionary. And what do you think the answer to *that* question is?

Boy. Well, I said to myself that, after all, India is *part* of the British Empire. That is why King George has come. While he is in India, he is not *away* from his Empire, or neglecting it, but the very opposite. He has come to help this bit of his Empire. His visit to India is part of his governing the Empire.

Missionary. And doesn't that help to answer your question about God and Christ and Palestine?

Boy. No, I don't think so.

Missionary. Doesn't it? Isn't Palestine part of God's Empire? Of course it is. Though it is a country on earth, that we can go and see for ourselves, it isn't outside of God's Empire. Earth as well as heaven belongs to God. And when Jesus lived in Palestine, that was God coming to the part of His Empire, or His universe, which we call the earth.

Boy. But what about the other parts, all those thirty years? What about His throne in heaven, where He reigns and rules over all? I suppose it's easy for King George, because he will only be away from London for a few months.

Missionary. Yes, and while he is looking after this part of his Empire, in India, other people can carry on the work of government for him in London. It doesn't all depend on him alone. He has plenty of good counsellors in London to help him, and when he travels abroad he can leave the government in their hands for a little.

Boy. And could God do that too?

Missionary. No, God could never do that. That is quite different. God governs every little bit of His universe all

the time, and it couldn't go on for one moment without Him.

Boy. But how can that be true if Jesus was God? Surely Jesus wasn't really governing the whole universe while He lived in Palestine. How *could* He, when He was a boy, and especially when He was a baby lying in a manger, as we were told in the Christmas story last Sunday?

Missionary. No, of course He couldn't. I'll try to explain it, though this is the most difficult part of all. . . . When Christians say that Jesus was God, they don't mean that He was just simply altogether God, and that there is no more to be said. It isn't quite as simple as that. It is much deeper. When King George was here a fortnight ago, if somebody had seen him passing, and asked me, 'Who is that?', I should have answered, 'That is King George'. But if when Jesus was in Palestine somebody had seen him passing, and pointed, and asked, 'What man is that?', it would not have been correct to answer, 'That is not a man; that is God'. That couldn't be right. For remember, Jesus used to talk to the people *about* God, and He used to pray *to* God (so the Bible tells us). And remember also, Jesus was crucified and died on the cross, but it would be all wrong to say that *God* was crucified or died on the cross. The followers of Jesus never said that. They knew that Jesus really was a man. But they knew also that He was different from all other men. So they said that He was the Son of God, and they were right. He was a real man, but He was also the Son of God. Or His followers sometimes put it in this other way. It was God the Father that created us, but it was God the Son that came to earth, as a man, in Jesus, to do His Father's will for our salvation.

Boy. Does that mean that God did not come to earth Himself, but sent His Son instead? As if King George, instead of coming to India himself, had sent the Prince of Wales. But it is far better to have the King himself. And

I think it would be far better to have God Himself. Why didn't God come Himself to save us? Why did He only send His Son?

Missionary. Well, that is not quite the right way to put it. It isn't really just like the King sending the Prince. It is quite different when it is God we are speaking of. When we say God sent His Son, it doesn't mean that God the Son came to earth and God the Father stayed behind in heaven. That would sound as if there were two separate Gods. That can't be right, for there is only one God.

Boy. But then how could He be ruling on His throne in heaven while Christ was in Palestine?

Missionary. Well, here is another thing you have to learn. God does not live in a place called heaven far away beyond the sky. We do sometimes picture it like that, and talk about it like that, to make it easier for our minds, and especially for the minds of children. But that is only a childish way of speaking, a sort of picture-thinking. God is much more wonderful than that, and heaven is more wonderful than that too. *Really* heaven is not far away, but very near us, as we sometimes feel when we think of dear friends of ours who have died and gone to heaven. And God is always near us. Wherever we go, we don't really leave God behind. That is true even of ordinary people like ourselves, who are not worthy of God's presence at all. And in a far deeper way it is true of Christ, the Son of God. When He came to earth, He didn't leave God behind. God was not only near Him, not only with Him, but *in* Him. This was God's own way of coming to earth for the salvation of mankind—coming right into human life, to live the life of a real man in this world as *we* have to do. That is what God did in Jesus. Jesus began as a baby, as we always remember at Christmas-time, and then he grew into a boy, and then into a man. And all the time, even when He died on the cross, God was in Him. It all happened in Palestine.

But all the time God was ruling the whole universe too. God was in Christ, but at the same time He was in heaven.

Boy. Do you mean that, while God was in Christ, that was not all there was of God? It wasn't the whole of God, but only part of Him. God was doing other things too, He was in other places too, carrying on His government of the whole world. Is that it?

Missionary. You *might* put it like that. But it isn't quite right to say 'part of God'. God is not made up of parts, that could be in different places. God is a Spirit, and He is independent of space. He doesn't really move from one place to another. He is not confined to *places* at all. He is everywhere, in heaven and earth and all the universe. But He was in Jesus in a quite special way. In Jesus He came right into our human life. So we can see Him in Jesus, and know what He is like. It is true that we can't see the *whole* of God in Jesus. We men and women could never understand the whole of God anyway. But all of God that *could* come into human life *did* come in Jesus. And so when we say that God sent His Son for our salvation, we don't mean that God Himself stayed behind. He wasn't doing less than He *might* have done. It was His very best. It was God Himself that was in Christ in Palestine. And all the time He was ruling His whole universe too. When we think of God creating and governing His universe, we say: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.' When we think of God coming to us in Jesus, in the country called Palestine, nineteen centuries ago, we say: 'I believe in Jesus Christ His Only Son, our Lord, who . . . suffered under Pontius Pilate . . .' And yet these aren't two different Gods, but one God. Now, does all that help you to answer your question?

Boy. Yes, it helps. I had been thinking of God as a King sitting on a real golden throne in a *place* called

heaven far away beyond the stars, watching the world from a distance, governing it from above; and I couldn't understand who took His place when He left His throne in heaven and came to earth. Now I understand that it wasn't a case of leaving a throne empty. He came in Jesus Christ His Son, who lived in Palestine, but all the time He was ruling the whole world too. . . . But even then, isn't it difficult to understand how God Almighty could really be in Jesus, as a baby, and as a boy, and as a man, and when He died on the cross, and at the same time be ruling the whole universe as Almighty God?

Missionary. Yes, of course it is difficult to understand. Ever since Jesus lived, His people have been wondering about it, and the very wisest of them have been trying to understand it and to think it out. I don't think anybody can quite explain it. But remember it is God we are talking about. It isn't any one else, but God, that could do all that. God could do it. We can't understand it. But God would not be anything like as wonderful to us as He is if we could understand everything He does. It is far better to have a God whom we *can't* altogether understand, isn't it, if only we can understand enough of Him for us to be able to trust Him? And that is just what we can do. He has shown us enough in Jesus Christ. And the more we trust, the more we shall understand.

DONALD M. BAILLIE

How could Christ be both Son of Man and Son of God?

IN trying to answer this big question we must first be sure that we have got our starting-point right. For nearly all of us make *two mistakes*.

(a) Firstly, we are far too apt to use the terms 'Man' and 'God' without ever stopping to ask whether we have any clear idea what they mean. We ask, 'How can Jesus Christ be both Man and God?' as if Jesus is the riddle while 'Man' and 'God' are perfectly plain ideas which the simplest of us can understand. In order to explain Jesus we imagine that we only have to combine our ideas of 'Man' and 'God' into some curious composite Being who unites the characteristics of both. But that is surely to begin at the wrong end. It is to label Jesus with our own preconceived ideas, whereas Jesus came to give us new ideas. As a matter of fact modern psychology is making us realize how very little we know about that strange creature we call 'man'. And if we understand ourselves so little, what right have we to presuppose any clear-cut notions about 'God'? No! As George Eliot put it, 'Ideas are poor ghosts until they become incarnate.' And for most of us both 'Man' and 'God' will be but misty notions, which we cannot possibly grasp, until we meet them in flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ. Our first step must be to get to know Jesus.

(b) Our second mistake is to imagine that 'Man' and 'God' are entirely separate beings, and 'human' and 'divine' totally different ideas. The result has been that for many of us Jesus Christ has been a quite incomprehensible being, who combined within Himself two utterly unrelated and inconsistent 'natures'. We have really been trying very hard to believe something so contrary

to reason that we hardly could 'believe' it. But surely the truth is quite otherwise. The Book of Genesis is right when it suggests that we are men and not merely brute beasts, that we have a human and not merely an animal nature, because God breathed into us the breath of His own life. What is it that separates you and me from the beasts? The possession of a spiritual nature—something within us that is tuned-in to a world beyond this world; the possession of a moral nature—something within us that can distinguish between right and wrong. We are men and women just because we have these things; and yet it is just these things that make us akin to God. There is no essential difference of *kind* between God's nature and ours. God's nature in its eternal and infinite perfection is just that towards which our human nature, in our moments of vision, is blunderingly groping forward. If it is God's nature to be perfect Love, then it is man's nature to try to learn the lesson of love; if it is God's nature to be Light, then it is man's ever to turn his face towards the Dawn. And so the Christian Gospel is not that there came into the world a mysterious composite Being with two natures 'so utterly unrelated and heterogeneous that a miracle of sheer omnipotence is needed to unite them'.¹ The Christian Gospel is that *God* perfectly revealed Himself to us in a *Man*.

Now with these two warnings in mind our big question perhaps becomes easier to answer. Shall we look at it from two angles?

(a) Firstly, Jesus Christ was at the same time 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God' because it is just through His achievement of perfect *manhood* that He has shown to us what *God* is really like. Our Lord Himself surely intended to impress this upon us by the very choice of that title which He regularly used of Himself, 'Son of Man', suggestive certainly of His true and representative humanity.

¹ H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 214.

Yet it was deliberately chosen because it recalled the great vision of Daniel vii, when 'there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of Man . . . and there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom'. Among the titles bestowed on Messiah by Jesus' contemporaries none claimed more divine attributes than did 'Son of Man'; and Jesus regularly used it in contexts which suggested not merely the lot of a humble 'Son of Man' who 'hath not where to lay his head', but also the victory of the Divine King: 'Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' The poet is right when he calls 'Jesus divinest, when Thou most art Man'.

And so, before ever we can understand the 'divinity' of Jesus, we must meet Him as a real man. And there is plenty of evidence in the Gospels that He was truly human. In His growth from boyhood to manhood He had to pass through the same stages as we do, to learn step by step, often after hesitation and perplexity, the goal towards which God was calling Him. He shared all our human joys and sorrows and temptations, tested in the wilderness, weeping at the grave of His friend Lazarus, throwing Himself into the simple gaiety of a village wedding. And Jesus was true man in mind as well as body. We find Him asking for information as one that did not know, even confessing ignorance about a matter of high theological importance (Mark xiii. 32). So *like* ourselves in all things! And yet is it not true to say that Jesus' truest and highest manhood comes out best in the things where He is *unlike* us and more akin to God? It is only when confronted by Jesus that we see what manhood at its best can be, and how far man as we know him falls short of it. The old theologians used to see Jesus' humanity in one set of facts and to see His divinity in quite another. Thus in a famous letter of Pope Leo I we read: 'To be hungry, to be thirsty, to be weary and to sleep are evidently human.'

But to satisfy thousands of men with five loaves of bread . . . and to walk on the surface of the sea . . . are undeniably divine.' How wrong-headed that is! The perfection of Jesus' humanity lay surely not merely in the physical weaknesses and animal needs which He shared with us—yes, and even with the beasts—but rather in those spiritual qualities wherein He so far transcended our poor imperfect humanity that we set Him apart from ourselves as 'divine'. Perhaps most of all that perfection of His humanity lay in His glorious *faith*, which He Himself claimed to be the secret of all those 'divine' miracles. Faith! Surely a quality essentially human, yet so far out of the reach of most of us that we can only call it 'divine'. And so, as Professor John Baillie has beautifully said, 'It is in this very faith, which was the crown and glory of Christ's humanity, and nowhere else, that we find the real presence of deity. For it was the constant teaching of Jesus that in all He did through faith, the real and ultimate doer was the Omnipotent God.'¹ By being perfect Man Jesus had shown us perfectly what God was like.

(b) That then is what we mean when we call Jesus 'Son of Man'. But that is not the whole answer. Jesus is rightly called 'divine' not only because in man's search for God He has led us 'farther ben' than any other before Him, but also because in Jesus as in no other we see not only man seeking God but *God seeking Man*. That is what Paul means when he says that 'God was in Christ'. In Jesus we see God's own face reflected as we can only see a father's face in his own son's. And that is what we mean when we call Jesus 'Son of God'. And so we perhaps reach at least the beginning of an understanding of that double nature which Jesus has always had for Christian believers. On the one hand, as Son of Man, He stands at the highest point to which humanity has yet attained—

¹ *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, p. 128.

the Pioneer of true manhood. On the other hand, as Son of God, He stands at the point where God has stooped nearest to us in saving love. Jesus, as Son of Man, did something never done before; He attained to perfect humanity. In Jesus, as Son of God, *God Himself did something* greater than even He had ever done; He perfectly revealed Himself. For, after all, that is the distinctive message of Christianity. In days of old men had imagined they could discover the will of God in portents and omens and oracles, by watching the flights of birds or the movement of the stars, by listening to seers or poring over the mere letter of a holy Book. The message of the New Testament is that the mind and will of God have been perfectly revealed to us in a Man. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' And so the idea of 'God', hitherto merely a 'poor ghost', has become real because it has become incarnate.

Now if it be asked by what right we thus single out one particular individual as the perfect revealer of God, the best answer is that the experience of millions has proved Him to be so. When Simon Peter stood up and made his great confession, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God', he was not a theological professor propounding a new and difficult doctrine; he was a simple, practical man telling his friends what he had actually found Jesus to be in his own life. When looked at as a 'doctrine' the thought that the man Jesus is also divine may seem difficult enough. But, as Adam Bede says in the novel, 'I look at it as if the doctrine was like finding names for your feelings.' When we give Jesus the name of 'Son of God' we are only calling Him what in our deepest Christian experience we have felt Him to be.

Do you see where our study has led us? Surely to see that we have perhaps been stating our problem in the wrong way. Practical men to-day are not worrying very much about the question, 'Is Jesus, or is he not, divine?'

But they are worrying about what sort of a God it is who is ruling this strange and tragic world. As Principal D. S. Cairns has put it: 'In the old days the controversy was about the divinity of Christ. To-day it is as to the absolute Christlikeness of Almighty God.' And Dr. Stanley Jones gives us the answer when he says, 'The greatest news that has ever been broken to the human race is that God is like Christ.'

G. H. C. MACGREGOR

If Christ was God, He could not have Sinned. Did He not therefore have an Advantage over Us?

I CANNOT give the full answer to this question because I do not know it. I have no experience which explains to me what it would feel like to be God incarnate, God living as man. When I try to use my imagination to make up for my want of experience, I often have to confess myself beaten by questions like this.

It helps me to see some light on it when I ask myself why I ever come to ask such questions. It is because I believe that as a matter of brute historic fact there lived in Palestine some 1,900 years ago One whose history cannot be explained except by the belief that He was God incarnate, God living as man. This belief has come down to me from those who knew Him at that time, who first knew what it was to follow Him as their earthly friend and leader, and then what it was to worship Him as their risen Lord, and through His gift of the Holy Spirit working in them to find themselves continually in His living presence, 'unseen but ever near'. These first disciples spread the faith by gathering in others to share with them their new way of life, the life of those who knew themselves to be the members of Christ's body, the eyes and mouths and hands and feet through which their living, risen Lord and Master was continuing His work of establishing the Father's kingdom on earth. But they never forgot that this ever-present Lord was the same Jesus with whom some of them had walked and talked on earth, and for the guidance of those who should join their number in years to come, they made a written collection of reminiscences of His earthly life. So the Christian Church down the ages has preached the Gospel, saying

to men and women: 'Join with us in living as members of our ever-present Lord and Master, seeking by the guidance of the Spirit to find and do the Father's will on earth. And so that you may have some definite, concrete knowledge of His character, and may know the kind of things that He wants done, here is the record of His life on earth, from which you may learn what manner of man He was.'

The amazing thing about this record is that while it was written by men who worshipped the risen Lord, it does not give the picture of a divine being play-acting at being man, but of an utterly human life, human in mind as well as in body. Apart from one or two editorial comments which are inconsistent with the picture as a whole,¹ it shows our Lord as growing in wisdom, as subject to temptation, as sharing in human ignorance about the future, as troubled by uncertainty as to His duty, and as dependent on His heavenly Father for guidance and strength.² Nevertheless He was such that those who came to know Him most intimately came to realize that simply to know Him as one man among others was not to know all the truth about Him. This human life was the human life of the Christ of God, who was Himself God.³

How could this have been so? How is it possible that God should have lived a life on earth subject to our human limitations? And, in particular, how could He have known temptation as we know it if He could not sin?

We have to remember that to be tempted is not the same thing as to be sinful. It may be my duty to apply my mind to a piece of work; the fact that I feel very strongly the attractiveness of sitting down to enjoy a novel does not mean that I am sinful. Moreover, if I persist in

¹ e.g. John ii. 24, 25; vi. 6.

² Luke ii. 52; iv. 2-13; Mark xiii. 32; xiv. 35-42; John xii. 27; viii. 28.

³ Mark viii. 29; John xx. 28.

doing the work I endure the temptation more fully than if I give way and read the novel. In such temptations, as Dr. Moberly pointed out, only one who was sinless could really bear the full brunt of them to the bitter end. It is temptations of this type that we read of our Lord enduring, as He faithfully trod the path that led to the Cross and resisted all enticements to act as Israel's Messiah by easier and more attractive ways.¹

We may also, of course, suffer from other temptations which arise out of our sinfulness. If I were not proud, I might not be tempted to be envious. Such temptations as these we do not believe our Lord to have experienced. He endured those which beset a perfect man living in this evil world.

But this does not make Him unable to understand and sympathize with our weakness. We know by experience that a self-indulgent life makes a man less and less able to understand and sympathize with his fellows: he grows more and more incapable of seeing things from any point of view except that of his own selfish interests. On the other hand, how often have we been surprised by the understanding tenderness with which our faults and weaknesses have been met when at last we have brought ourselves in bitter shame to reveal them to some saint of God. Jesus Christ, who bore to the uttermost such temptations as were His on earth, by His very sinlessness is free from any selfishness which would hinder Him from entering with complete understanding and sympathy into all our lives.

We believe that Jesus Christ came on earth and lived as man 'for us men and for our salvation'. We believe that He lived a perfect human life, not an imperfect and sinful one, and that His perfect life was sufficient to fulfil His purpose—'for us men and for our salvation'. We must not regard our very imperfect lives as the standard,

¹ See, e.g., Mark viii. 32, 33.

and measure the genuineness of our Lord's humanity by the degree of His approximation to our own. It is His life which is the standard human life, and He lived it in order to enable us to share it. He came on earth to draw us up to His level, and we believe Him to have been human in all that was required for this purpose but not necessarily in anything more. It is thus true in a sense that He 'had an advantage over us'. But it was not an advantage which made His life any the easier, and it was an advantage which makes Him all the more able to help us to share it.

I might go on suggesting a number of thoughts which help to shed light on our problem. In this way the Christian mind exercises itself in meditating over the mysteries of the faith. But it is really better that you who read this should begin by doing it for yourselves instead of waiting for me or any one else to do it for you. If you have been accustomed to think of Christ mainly as your divine Lord, you may need to grow in your realization of the reality of His human life. So far as He is to you your Master and Leader simply because He was the greatest of men in history, you may need to learn to say with St. Thomas: 'My Lord and my God.' In either case the method is the same. Study the Gospel records with the determination to grow in the knowledge of Him. Let that historic portrait develop in your minds, gaining a detail here and a detail there. Study it as the historic human life of Him who is now your living Lord and Master, and by the guidance of His holy Spirit you will discover for yourselves depths of meaning in that life which neither I nor any one else could reveal to you.

LEONARD HODGSON



*What Sort of a Boy must Christ have been?
He can't have been 'much fun'; and if
He were 'an Ordinary Boy' He must
have Sinned, Mustn't He?*

I AM not at all sure how far what I can say will be helpful, but it seems to me that what is at the bottom of this difficulty—it is a difficulty I have heard of before cropping up in some odd ways—is that it is not realized that Christ, according to orthodox Christian teaching, was not a sort of angelic being visiting our world from some superhuman region, but absolutely and thoroughly human in the fullest possible way. That in Him the Divine word was united with our nature does not mean that He had not our nature, in all its fullness, all its strength, and all its weakness. Before He was a man He was a child, and before that an infant, speechless and helpless like all infants; of course, then, He was once a boy with boys and an 'adolescent' with 'adolescents', and He knew all the experiences, physical and mental, of the growth from childhood through youth into manhood. This is what is meant by the statement that 'He grew in wisdom and in favour with God and man'. If this is so, it becomes idle to ask whether He was 'much fun', or whether He experienced the temptations characteristic of adolescence. As for the first point, of course if all that is meant is whether He was the sort of boy who has a keen perception of humour or not, we can't answer it at all fully. It seems to me plain that however divine, Christ, like every one else, must have had His particular mental make-up, which may be called 'accidental', or 'irrelevant', just as He had physical peculiarities which are neither more nor less divine than others, such as a certain

height, a certain colour of hair or eyes, and the like. So He may have been a boy either of the rather 'serious' type or of the more markedly 'humorous' type. We do not know which—though the recorded parables seem to me full of touches which show a delicately observant quiet humour—and it is irrelevant to His special position to us, as the man through whom God came into human life, to which type He belonged, just as it is irrelevant to us whether He was tall or short, had red hair or dark, spoke, like Peter, with a brogue, or not. There is, too, no good reason to suppose that He must have been physically remarkably beautiful, or may not have had too long a nose or the like, and so there is no reason why a good deal that interests us should not have been, as Edwyn Bevan says in his excellent little book on Christianity, quite outside the range of His earthly interests. He did not come to earth to supply us with a model of physical beauty, nor yet to give us an example of the achievements of a humorist, or a man of science, or an inventor, but to give His life for the world.

As to the other and more important point, Christ, we are told, was tempted in all things like ourselves. In the stories of the forty days in the wilderness we have a dramatization of this. The tempter is represented as appealing in succession to such weaknesses as those of bodily appetite, ambition, spiritual pride, and at the crisis of His life we see Him facing cruel and early death, not with any stoic bravado, but with all the ordinary man's shrinking from pain, exposure, and death. If this is so, it is surely idle to suggest that though He knew in His own frame the other passions of our human flesh, He did not know those which beset adolescence. There is no reason whatever for supposing Him to have been in any way abnormal in this respect; in fact, to suggest it seems to me a relic of the Docetic heresy. We can see clearly enough that He was sensible to the enjoyments of eating

and drinking (which was precisely why His enemies called Him a glutton and a drinker), and the same thing will hold good of other enjoyments. The point is not that He could not feel their attraction, but that He was 'tempted, but without sin'. I think the supposed difficulty is created by the assumption that *if* a man does not commit certain transgressions (sexual ones in particular), it must be because he never felt the appeal of them. Now, apart from the case of Christ, this is happily untrue. To take an example, Burns had an 'ardent temperament' which misled him into much unhappy conduct. Samuel Johnson led, in these respects, apparently, an absolutely exemplary life. But we have evidence that Johnson's temperament was as ardent as Burns's. The difference is that the one man was mastered by his temperament, and the other made himself master of it. When we meet a man who seems above other men in his superiority to lust or fear, or other sources of wrong-living, it is superficial to assume that this must be because he does not feel the emotions which lead other men wrong. It may be precisely that he was naturally exceptionally susceptible to them, but by the grace of God realized the fact in time and set himself to get the better of his 'temperament'. We see this often enough in the case of men who show remarkable patience under provocation: often enough the secret of their patience is that they are men of naturally high and quick choler who have known where their danger lay, and have won the victory over it. Hence the argument (which is probably meant) that *if* Christ felt the human appeal of sex at all as normal men do, He '*must* have sinned', is to my mind only false psychology. It would not be true of a thoroughly good man who was a mere man that either he must never have felt certain temptations *or* he must have fallen before them. And if Christ was what Christians hold Him to be, we can easily conceive that He could feel the appeal of certain tempta-

tions and yet not consent to them even to the extent of allowing Himself to dwell in thought on the dangerous thing. It must be remembered that to feel a temptation is not in itself in any way sinful: the sin only begins when the will consents in thought to dally with the suggestion. Just so it was no sin of cowardice in Christ that He felt the shrinking from imminent torture and death in the garden. As I once heard a man say in a sermon, 'No man should think he is not in God's grace merely because he feels temptation to grossness.'

A. E. TAYLOR

Why was Jesus Baptized if He had not Sinned?

THE rite of baptism as practised by John the Baptist implied repentance in those who submitted to it and a longing for 'the remission of sins'. Our Christian teaching is that Jesus never sinned. Why then was He baptized? Such is the form of our question.

It is one of those questions which must be answered indirectly. The answer will appear only after we have tried to understand the meaning which Jesus attached to His own baptism. In order to do so, let us briefly examine the four accounts of the story given in the gospels. The baptism is described in Matt. iii. 13-17, Mark i. 9-11, Luke iii. 21, 22. It is alluded to in the Fourth Gospel by the Baptist himself (John i. 29-34). Both Matthew's and Luke's accounts are written with Mark before them, but there are certain differences. Mark's account clearly implies that the voice, and the vision of the opened heavens and the descent of the Spirit 'like a dove', were apparent to Jesus alone. Matthew's account implies that the voice was heard and the vision perceived by those who were present.¹ The Fourth Gospel regards the vision of the dove as an outward sign given to the Baptist alone. Luke's account, like Mark's, seems to imply that the vision and the voice represent an inward and mystical experience of Jesus. His narrative, however, causes perplexity when he insists that the dove appeared

¹ The narrative in Matt. iii. 14 ff. also shows that the very question we are discussing must have been raised in the Christian community, from which the Evangelist derived his tradition. The narrative represents the answer that was given. The question of the historicity of, and the reason implied in, the Baptist's hesitation cannot be now discussed. The answer given by Jesus may be translated, 'Thus it becometh us to carry out the will of God', and the interpretation of the meaning of the Baptism here given is in accordance with it.

'in bodily form', at the same time as he stresses the inwardness of the vision by saying that Jesus 'was praying' at the moment. Evidently there are two directions which early Christian tradition took regarding the accompaniments of Jesus' baptism. The one regards it as an inward experience; the other as both this, and also accompanied by a vision perceptible, and a voice audible, to others. We must choose between them.

Mark's account is the earliest, and is both the simplest and the most illuminating. The baptism of Jesus was accompanied by a unique and inward experience of His own, with elements in it that go far beyond any ordinary human experience. Only He Himself could have described it, as only He could have described the experience of the Temptation which immediately follows. Here we are on sure historical ground. We are attempting to interpret an historical fact in Christ's own consciousness, which He alone could have revealed. It was a decisive moment in His own life, and marked the beginning of His ministry. There must have been a 'before' and an 'after'. We know practically nothing of His childhood and earlier manhood. We are told that He 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'. The only definite glimpse we have of His childhood's religion is the story of His being found in the Temple, and the reply to His parents: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' That answer assumes that even then He possessed a unique sense of God as His Father, and of a relationship towards Him which carried with it a solitariness of obligation and responsibility, greater than any obligation He owed to His parents.¹ This incident shows that the consciousness of Jesus, even in these early years, was moving towards the climax which it reached at His Baptism.

What is the nature of this climax? The consciousness

¹ Luke ii. 39-52.

of Jesus must always be approached with reverence. Whatever elements of ecstasy or rapture there were in the Baptism experience, these neither discredit it nor explain it. Rather they emphasize how incommunicable it was. If the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove upon Him is the form of words which Jesus Himself employed in His attempt to communicate His experience to His disciples, it can only mean that now He was fully conscious of a Divine power in His life. Is the symbolism of the dove derived from the idea of the creative spirit of God, brooding over the watery void of the creation story? Is the Spirit that was now fully His own, the spirit of Divine creative love, about to be exercised on the lives of men? Moreover, this consciousness of Divine love as a creative power within Him is not just a mass of elevated feeling at work in His own soul. It is accompanied by a clear declaration from God, received and understood by Jesus Himself, that He occupies an absolutely unique relation to God. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' In other words, He enjoys completely the love and favour of God, as well as shares His redemptive power.

God speaks to Him, as God often speaks, not in a voice from the clouds, but in words taken from Scripture. On the Scriptures of the Old Testament He nourished His own soul. 'Thou art my Son' is taken from the second psalm, and is addressed to the ideal King of Israel. The second clause, 'In thee I am well pleased', recalls the words of Isaiah xlii. 1: 'My chosen in whom my soul delighteth.' Jesus knows Himself to be the embodiment of that mysterious 'suffering servant', whom God endowed with His spirit that He may 'bring forth judgement to the Gentiles', or 'carry true religion to the nations' (Moffatt). In such passages as these Jesus had often steeped his thoughts. 'At last, in this high hour of visitation by the living God, they spoke to Him with direct, identifying,

appropriating power.¹ The whole idea of the 'suffering servant' was in His mind. At that moment of baptism, He knew that Nazareth and His daily toil there lay behind Him. He knew Himself to be both the ideal King of Israel, endowed with power for His mission, and the lowly servant, who accepts the way of love, that He may bear 'the sin of many', and make 'intercession for the transgressors'.²

Such seems to be the content of the experience, and the interpretation is confirmed by the nature of the ministry here accepted and entered upon. The next question we must ask is, 'Why did Jesus choose this way of entering upon His ministry, and definitely attach Himself to those who were influenced by the Baptist's message?' Is it not because He himself was influenced by it? That this is so is one of the certainties of New Testament interpretation. The Baptism of Jesus is no merely formal act. All the references of Jesus to John the Baptist show that He regarded him as one who had a mission and a message of his own, entrusted to him by God. He is 'more than a prophet'. 'Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.' John is 'a burning and a shining light'. The baptism of John is 'from heaven' and not 'of men'. True, 'he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he'. Jesus did not merely carry on John's mission and develop his message, but had Himself a unique vocation. Yet these other references are not merely generous recognition by one greater than John, but the utterances of one who felt that He owed to John, and to his movement, what was supremely valuable in His own religious consciousness. The Baptist's preaching and movement had national effects. They were for Jesus the signal from God to enter upon His ministry, and also the means of perfecting and clarifying His own thoughts regarding that unique rela-

¹ J. Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 203 ff.

² Isa. liii. 12.

tion to God, of which He had always been conscious, and His Divine mission to the world. The movement was 'from heaven' and not 'from men'. Jesus must not only recognize it, but must identify Himself with its Divine purpose. He Himself is its fulfilment in history. Already God's will was apparent in the breaking up by the Baptist of the placid and soulless routine of Jewish piety. Now, the 'Kingdom' (or Sovereign Power) of God was not only at hand, but actually was here in His own person and mission. Jesus knew Himself to be equipped with the Spirit, that is with the saving power of God, and to stand in such a relationship to God, that His own message and mission were the full expression of the will of God for men.

Our particular question, therefore, takes on a new aspect when we reflect that Jesus Himself has thus, in the record of the voice and the vision, described the thoughts which He had, when He submitted to baptism. It is plain that the idea of personal penitence is absent. Instead there emerges, not reflection on His own sinlessness, but a real sense of moral and spiritual supremacy over men. How then is that supremacy to be used according to God's will? Herein lies the absolutely original element in the message and mission of Jesus. That Divine supremacy is manifested neither in denunciation nor in segregation of the repentant, but in a loving identification with and accountability for those whose consciences had been aroused by the Baptist's preaching. The Saviour becomes one with the saved, although in His own consciousness He is other than they. A loving accountability? What does that mean? A simple illustration will show that such accountability and identification are characteristic of the purest and noblest human love, and may lead us to the threshold of Christ's motive in submitting to baptism. A pure-hearted mother can never remain at a distance of moral supremacy from her child's

shame and sin. A sense of responsibility for sins not our own is far nobler and greater than sympathy. The shame of an erring child becomes a real element in the loving personality of the mother; becomes so more really than the shame felt in the erring child itself. The very shame may paralyse the sense of penitence in the child, just in proportion as his sin has alarmed him.¹ The purer and nobler, the more Christlike, the mother's love is, the more deeply will she identify herself with the experience of the erring child. Thus, to pass far beyond the limits of our illustration, we reach the threshold of the Divine love. The very sinless purity of Jesus would give to His love a quality of vicariousness which is unique and inseparable from its nature. He was baptized, because it was God's will that He should enter into the whole conditions and responsibilities of sinful men. He made that pure and loving will His own. He entered into the needs of sinful men, as far as love that knew nothing of sin could go, which is all the way. Hence the form of our question with which we started, changes radically. It is no longer, 'How could Jesus be baptized, if He was sinless?' but, 'How could He stand aloof, if the spirit of God fully dwelt in Him?'

R. H. STRACHAN

¹ Cf. R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 123 ff.

Was Christ able to Sin?

IT is essential, as we have seen already, in order to arrive at a correct understanding about the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to believe that He was absolutely human, even as He was absolutely Divine. Both His humanity and His Divinity are equally true of Him, and both must be ranked as of equal importance if we are even to begin to understand His Person. It is as much a 'heresy' to deny one of His natures as to deny the other.

While on this earth as Man, He lived as a man, with all man's characteristics. How, then, is it possible to think of Him as sinless? Does such a statement not cut Him off at once from being utterly human; for who in this world could ever imagine a sinless man? Yet we are to believe, we must believe, that our Lord, in all His humanity, was as one of us, tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Our Lord, then, did not sin; such is our faith. The question that now confronts us is, Was He able to sin?

When we ask this question we are faced with three alternative answers. (1) No, He could not sin. (2) Yes and No; He could sin, but was able *not* to sin; that is, He had the 'framework' to sin—His humanity, but could, for example, by the interposing of His Divinity, prevent Himself from sinning. (3) Yes; He could sin, but did not.

Now, before we consider each of these answers in turn, perhaps it might be as well to attempt to define, in as short a way as possible, the word 'sin'. (Elsewhere in this book,¹ Father Bull has given a much fuller treatment of the subject.) 'Sin', as has been pointed out,² when applied to our Lord, cannot be used as we hear it so often loosely used to-day, in a sense merely of conduct or behaviour, what is called an ethical sense. Used merely

¹ p. 197.

² L. W. Grensted, *The Person of Christ*.

in this purely ethical sense, sin has no real definition, it must always be more a 'matter of opinion' than anything else, or, put in more technical terms, more 'subjective' than 'objective'. But sinlessness in our Lord Himself means, in the only intelligible sense of the word, the full and positive response of His whole being to the God whom He knew as Father, and therewith to the guiding of that Power which He taught men to know as the Holy Spirit.¹ Or, in Father Bull's fine words: 'Sin is any failure or refusal to do the will of God; choosing an isolated selfishness instead of a co-operative fellowship with God; choosing to love myself more than God and my neighbour.'

Applying this definition to our Lord, are we not at once faced with at least two difficulties? In the first place the question arises: Did our Lord not commit any unconscious sins in His boyhood days which might rob Him of the title 'sinless'? 'His perception of later good may have involved His seeing earlier acts as sin. They were not sins in the light He had then, but may have been in the light He had later.'² Even we can look back with real regret on sins committed when we were much younger, even though the greatest sin then would be the least of the sins we are guilty of now. How much more would One who had *become sinless* see early sins?

The real answer to this question would seem to be the witness of Christ Himself. He never once said, as far as we know, 'I know just what it is like, for I did it myself.' Rather was His attitude, 'Who convicts me of sin?' . . . And who did? And the witness is not only in what He said, but in the life He lived, and the death He died. Further, our Lord's attitude towards sinners would, in itself, seem to emphasize His sinlessness. In one who had

¹ L. W. Grensted, *ibid.*, p. 278.

² Leslie Weatherhead, *His Life and Ours*, p. 373. For this subject H. R. Mackintosh's *The Person of Jesus Christ*, pp. 35 ff., is invaluable.

sinned, how much greater would have been the hypocrisy He so readily condemned in Scribe and Pharisee! His association with sinners (how often did Jesus show His love for the sinner, while utterly loathing the sin), so readily condemned in His time by His enemies, surely served to emphasize the more His own sinlessness. What an opportunity that would have been for classing Him with the sinners as a fellow sinner; for there are only two types that can usually associate with sinners—other sinners, or those so differing from them that there can be no mistaking them. Is it not very significant to-day that the only people who dare to be seen in the company of sinners of the worst type, unarmed and unafraid, are those who act in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The second difficulty is: If Christ was sinless, as we believe, did He really know anything about sin at all? Dr. Martineau once wrote what is surely the best reply to such a question: 'Sin is the only thing in the universe of which it may truly be said that the more you practise it, the less you know its nature.' Can it not, then, be said that the less you practise it, the more you know its nature? Then, if Jesus did not sin at all, He knew more about the nature of sin than any one else!

Before we tackle the question proper, one other point might well be stressed. 'Sinless' does not necessarily mean 'perfect'. To say that Christ was without sin, means that He never *consciously* went against the will of God. 'Perfection', as Dr. Streeter puts it, 'involves not only the will to good, but absolute knowledge of the best way under all circumstances of translating will into deed.'¹ But Jesus 'grew in wisdom', and 'though He was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered'. He was, moreover, subject to the intellectual limitations and misconceptions of His day.² To be sinless is to be

¹ B. H. Streeter, *Adventure*, p. 153.

² A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Foundations*, p. 368.

pure in heart from the beginning; and to be pure in heart is to have one end in view only, 'to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever'.

With this general definition of sin, and the consequent problems raised, we can now tackle more effectively the question 'Was Christ able to sin?' with its three alternative answers.

First, then, let us take the possible answer: Christ could not sin. This means of course that Christ was not able to sin, even as a man born blind is not able to see. He simply had not the sinning faculty. To believe this seems to me to deny the real humanity of our Lord, to make Him an angelic superman on earth. It is but a revival of an old heresy, called the Docetic heresy, condemned by the Church a long time ago. How could such a one be 'tempted *like as we are*'? How could such a one be anything else than 'without sin'? This proposition is clearly against all true Christian teaching and faith; for if our Lord could not sin, if He was simply not able to sin, then He was not really human, and His words to us about sin and sinners would lose that human touch, which in the long run is to us the essence of the divine in Him. Spinsters' children and spinsters' husbands are proverbially perfect; and so our Lord's teaching about sin and his condemnation of sin would have no real meaning, for we would rightly feel that He was not able to understand what temptation really meant. The chief weight of our Lord's teaching regarding sin lies in the fact that He knew well what it was to be 'up against it'; but that He had conquered. Somehow we feel that He must in a very real way understand the penitence of the 'miserable sinner'; and it is because of that knowledge that we feel sure that He must ever intercede for us. It is because we feel that our Lord knew what real temptation was like for one 'just as I am', and because we know that He was able to win the victory every time over the attack that sin

made; it is that that enables us to have the confidence to get on our knees and say 'Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy'. 'For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.' Shortly, then, to say that our Lord could not sin is to deny that He was ever really human. But the faith of the Catholic Church is that 'we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate, . . . AND WAS MADE MAN'.

A second answer to our question 'Was Christ able to sin?' is, as we have seen, that Christ could sin but was able *not to*. That is to say, He was human, but as He could 'work miracles', so He could refuse to sin, making this refusal to sin as it were, itself a miracle. In other words, He was human, except when He wanted not to be! And that, of course, is not to be human at all. Can this be called Christ's victory over sin? Should we not more accurately call it a 'walk over'? Did St. Paul say, 'Thanks be to God Who gave us the walk over through Jesus Christ our Lord?' Of course not! It was a victory, and a victory demands a fight; and our Lord called in no supernatural aid, although He told us that, on one occasion at least, He could have done so—when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the words of the hymn, He was 'pleased with man as man to dwell'. 'If at every crisis we ascribe to Him some divine power beyond our reach, that triumphant sinlessness becomes a mockery instead of an inspiration.'¹ To say that our Lord was, by some divine power, able not to sin, was a heresy condemned as long ago as the year 318, when a priest called Arius said that Jesus Christ, though He had a human body, had not a human nature. So we see that there is really very little difference between this answer and the first answer.

¹ C. M. Chilcott in *Adventure*, p. 231.

We now come to the third, and I believe the right, answer: Christ could sin, but would and did not. He had the faculty to sin as every human being has, but, by the strength of His character and the power received through contact with the Father, He fought all temptation, and conquered all sin. 'We must insist that, however shocking it may be to maintain that Christ was liable to sin, the New Testament explicitly states that He was tempted, and nothing short of liability to sin can make temptation a reality.'¹ If we are really to understand the humanity of our Lord, it is necessary to believe that He must have had a humanity of the same nature as ours, not, of course, knowing all our temptations, since yielding to sin too often brings other temptations peculiar to the yielding, but at least living in the truest form the life we who try to follow Him can only blunder through.

Therefore, while at first the idea of a man withstanding all temptation and remaining sinless would seem quite absurd, it is neither unnatural nor impossible. We all know people about whom we can say, 'He would never do a thing like that; he might do this, I grant you, but he would never do that!' Other people we know may have quite the opposite characteristics. Human nature is not bad all round; but it is 'patchy'. So that if we were to take the best characteristics of the best people throughout the years, we would still have perfectly human characteristics and yet this 'corporate man' of our imagination would be sinless. 'Behold', said Pilate, *'the Man!'*

But the main point that I have tried to stress is that our Lord's nature on earth must have been fully man's; and it is the nature of man that He can sin. But, and this is the important point, it is not the nature of man that he must sin, or even that he does and 'can't help it'; though since the 'fall' of man that has come to be regarded as the case. 'The summary proof... that sin is not according to man's

¹ C. M. Chilcott, *ibid.*, p. 232.

true nature, that it is rebellion and not nature, lies in the fact that in Christ, the true man, sin had no place. He viewed sin in no other way than as the disease which He came to remedy, the havoc of the intruder which He came to expel.¹ Christ's victory was a real victory; and He showed us how we could be victorious too.

RONALD SELBY WRIGHT

¹ Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 167.

Do you need to Believe in the Virgin Birth to be a Christian?

JESUS was not born in the usual way because He was not a usual man. He is the eternal Son of God, truly and fully man, but more than merely a *man*. He is THE MAN, the One who gathered up into union with His divine Person the whole human race. St. Paul says of Him, 'He is before all things, and by Him all things consist' (i.e. stand or hold together).¹ You can't say, without a sense of degradation, 'I live; yet not I, but Mr. Smith lives in me.' You *can* say, with St. Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'² His indwelling is the basis of all human personality. He is the Word of God 'by whom all things were made', 'the true Light which lighteth every man, coming into the world'.³ Professor Romanes answers your question. George Romanes was Darwin's greatest disciple, and the Regius Professor of Physics in the University of Oxford. He was at first an agnostic, and felt it his duty to write three destructive essays against the Christian religion, because he thought that this doctrine of the Incarnation, that 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us' was utterly absurd. But under the influence of Dr. C. Gore and others he learned to doubt his doubts; was converted to the Christian religion; became a devout communicant in the Church; and wrote a complete refutation of his former errors, *Thoughts on Religion*. In it he answers the objection that the Incarnation 'is opposed to common sense'. 'No doubt, utterly so; but so it ought to be if true. Common sense is merely a rough register of common experience; but the Incarnation, if it ever took place, whatever else it may

¹ Col. i. 17.

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ John i. 3, 9.

have been, at all events cannot have been a common event' (p. 175).

The belief in the Virgin Birth is a *dependent belief*, dependent on the acceptance of Jesus as the eternal Son of God. If *for other reasons*, such as His sinless life, His character and claims, His teaching, His resurrection, His influence on the world, and your own living experience of His love and friendship, you believe the Church's teaching that He is the eternal Son of God, then it is most congruous that He should enter our human life by a Virgin Birth. This is the way in which the first Christians received it.

Why two earthly Parents? When I myself was troubled about this unusual birth, I analysed my doubts. I asked myself what lay behind my reluctant doubt? Was there some prejudice? Yes, certainly. I was reluctant to express my personal belief in an event which seemed against the ordered sequence of history, an irregular occurrence in the closed-in tidy universe which science had invented. No other case of virgin birth had occurred in the history of the human race; there had always been two earthly parents. Why two parents? This led me to study the facts and meaning of sex. I had always believed that two parents were essential to fertilization and to the reproduction of life. But now I learned that this is not true. Two parents are not in the least necessary to the production of life. When life first appeared on the earth the idea of two parents seems never to have occurred to Nature. Many whole species of living things are reproduced by parthenogenesis, reproduction without sexual union. Nature has used several methods of reproduction: budding, as in the sea-weed and yeast, fission, karyokinesis—the splitting of the nucleus, self-fertilization, alternation. Why, then, did nature introduce differentiation of sex when two cells join together (conjugate) to produce a third? I studied the embryologists, and sum

up their opinion in these extracts. In *Embryology*, by Sir Gerald Leighton, p. 12, I read:

'It is important at this stage to note that the creatures we have mentioned, and even some more highly organized, such as an amoeba, which has a nucleus, go through these simple or complicated reproductive processes in the total absence of anything which could suggest a distinction of sex. In these cases the individuals are obviously all of one sex, and therefore the distinction of sexes into male and female is evidently something which has been added later in the scheme of evolution, not for the purpose of reproduction itself, but for something which is to be added to that.'

What is that purpose? I read Sir G. Archdall Reid's *Laws of Heredity* (1910):

'Some species consist only of females. They are parthenogenetic, that is the virgin females produce offspring. Without union with another germ cell the ovum becomes the ancestor of a new cell-community' (p. 2).

'According to this hypothesis, therefore, it would appear that the function of sex is to render nature powerless to reproduce adaptive changes' (p. 320).

'The function of sex is to blend parental characters' (p. 202).

'On the other hand, if, as Mendelians suppose, bi-parental reproduction mixes parental characters as marbles are mixed but leaves them otherwise unchanged, we have *no alternative but to suppose that such mixing is both the effect and the actual function of sex. I think it is impossible to imagine any other function*' (footnote, p. 188). (The italics are mine.)

The general result of my studies was to convince me that the function of sex, the purpose of having two earthly parents, is to give a double set of gametes or genes of inheritance to the new offspring so as to give it a better chance in life. As in the Incarnation of the Son of God there would be no need for this double inheritance, there seems to be no reason whatever why our Lord should have two earthly parents.

I do not quote from scientific men to confirm the Christian Faith. Science is working in a different 'universe of discourse', an abstract 'closed-in' universe, and with a technical apparatus which cannot allow God to intervene in His universe as it would upset all their calculations. I only quote the writings of scientific men to show that the deep-seated, violent prejudice against the Virgin Birth has no support whatever from what Science can tell us of God's ways of working in the world. He has used many ways of transmitting life. The method of bi-parentalism was introduced for a purpose which does not apply to the Incarnation. The method of virgin birth *does* apply; and is seen to be most congruous, especially in this respect—that it does not involve any self-regarding impulse.

Christians are born of God, not made by their opinions: born by the virgin birth of 'water and the Spirit' in Holy Baptism,¹ 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'.² The free act of God's love chose you to be born again into the glorious Family of the Twice-born sons of God. I think the question really means: 'Can you retain full belief in Christ as Son of God without believing in the Virgin Birth?' Many have tried and failed to do so. Professor Orr writes in *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 206: 'The best proof of all of the inadequacy of this half-way position is that, historically, it has never been able to maintain itself.' It is a matter of personal guidance on which a lad should consult his minister or priest. I can only state general principles. If a lad desires with all his heart to believe what the Church teaches, and yet cannot say that he is personally convinced of it, I think that he should remain in the Communion of the Church with the prayer: 'Lord, I believe: help Thou my unbelief.' Your

¹ John iii. 5.

² John i. 13.

personal opinion may change from day to day, with every book you read. So it is best to trust the corporate Creed, the Family tradition. There is nothing wrong in doubting, provided you doubt your doubts and know your ignorance. There is nothing wrong in the question: 'How can this be?' In fact that was the very question the Virgin Mary asked when the Angel told her that she should be the mother of the Son of God.¹ But note:

1. *Unquestioning Faith is quite reasonable*, if you do not care to form a personal opinion, accepting it just because your mother, the Church, teaches it. This is the way in which you have accepted another belief of the same kind, without question; the belief that you are the son of him whom you have always regarded as your father. You have accepted this without doubt or question simply on the strength of the family tradition; and would be rather shocked and offended if asked to prove it; which might be impossible if you were an orphan. I only mention this to show you that birth differs from every other event because two persons only can give first-hand testimony. I must refer you for a full discussion of this subject to two books by most competent scholars: *The Virgin Birth of Jesus*, by Dr. G. H. Box (1916), and *The Virgin Birth of our Lord*, by Dr. L. Prestige (1918). From these we learn:

2. *The Evidence*. I think it is as good as it could be, considering the subject and the circumstances. (i) It was recorded as soon as it could be with any decency by St. Luke and by St. Matthew who had the opportunity, knowing what those believed who were in direct touch with the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who would have contradicted it at once if it was not true. (ii) Their testimony is reinforced by the slanders of the Jews. (iii) As we have seen, such a birth is most congruous with the

¹ Luke i. 34.

belief about the Person of our Lord, taught by St. John and St. Paul. (iv) Of course it was not mentioned in the preaching because it is a *dependent* belief; and because it could not be discussed publicly before hostile crowds while Mary was alive. You wouldn't like your birth and your mother's character to be discussed in every Church and Chapel while she was alive.

3. *Doubt your Doubts.* Don't accept your doubts on authority. Ask 'Why do I doubt?' Professor Romanes did this, and writes: 'The doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity seemed to me most absurd in my agnostic days. But now, as a pure agnostic' (one without prejudices) 'I see no rational difficulty at all.' 'Now at one time it seemed to me impossible that any proposition, verbally intelligible as such, could be more violently absurd than that of the doctrine (of the Incarnation). Now I see that this stand-point is *wholly irrational*, due to the blindness of reason itself promoted by (purely) scientific habits of thought.' What lies behind the reluctance to believe in such a birth? 'It seems to be inconsistent with the ordered universe of science.' But this universe of science is not the *real* universe; it is only an 'abstraction', a section cut off, a model made for working purposes, e.g. the 'billiard-ball' model of matter. In my seventy years of life I have seen three such models created and abandoned; I have attended the birth of three 'Modern Minds': watched them nervously squeezing themselves into the current scientific model: and die. I have attended their funerals; and each has left me something in its will for which I am profoundly grateful! You can't stake your life on two such instabilities as a changing science and a growing mind; this is to build your house on the sands. The real world includes 'judgement-values' such as the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, and 'relationships', as well as 'existences'. Reason by itself cannot judge the Truth. A merely 'natural' religion is

worthless: it cannot save men. Christianity is essentially 'supernatural'. By 'natural' I mean 'the energizing of those forces which God has implanted in created things'. By 'supernatural' I mean 'the energizing of forces, and the activity of Persons, who are not included in the sum-total of created things'. A God who cannot intervene cannot save. So, while using your reason to satisfy yourself that the evidence is sufficient to justify an adventure of faith, allow your heart to speak: fall down and worship God in the Holy Eucharist: and repeat the ancient hymn, from the liturgy of St. James:

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling
stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessings in his
hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to
demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth He
stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture—in the Body and the
Blood—
He will give to all the faithful His own Self for heavenly
food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on
the way,
As the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless
day,
That the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears
away.

At His feet the six-winged Seraph; Cherubim with sleepless
eye,
Veil their faces to the Presence, as with ceaseless voice they
cry,
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya, Lord most High.

For only to the humble-minded, and in prayer and worship, can the assurance of the Truth be born in your heart by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

PAUL B. BULL

Did not Some One have to betray Jesus, to fulfil the Scriptures; so why blame Judas, or for that matter, Pontius Pilate? If Christ had to be Crucified, in what way was His Crucifixion Wrong?

‘CHRIST had to be crucified.’ What do we mean by that? I suggest that what we mean, to start with, is that in a world like this, men being what they are, such a person as Jesus Christ was certain to be made to suffer.

There are various sorts of people in the world—the good, wise, kindly, and honest sort, who are out to help their fellow men, and the crooked, stupid, vicious, and cruel sort who prey upon their fellows for their own ends. So there are bound to be clashes and conflicts. If you see a man of high principles setting out to fight some gross and powerful evil, then, knowing what people are, you say, ‘He’s in for it.’ You do not mean that it is written in some book of fate that he is doomed to suffer such and such things; but that, the world being what it is, he must expect to suffer for his principles. Most of us are such half-and-half people that we manage to avoid the more severe kinds of conflict; but we know that if we really mean to do the right, come what may, we must be prepared to pay the cost; and we know that the man who is ‘all out’ for high and unpopular ideals must count upon opposition and ill treatment. He rarely escapes.

Four hundred years before Christ a wise Greek thinker, Plato, put this in a challenging way. Suppose, he said, that a man appeared who was completely righteous in every way; and suppose the standards of the community were so false that everything he did seemed to them

unrighteous: what would happen to him? He would be hated, abused, and finally crucified. Plato was simply going upon the facts of life as he had observed them, when he said that in a world like this the righteous must suffer.

When the Hebrew prophets, hundreds of years before Christ, drew a picture of the righteous Servant of the Lord, brought 'as a sheep to the slaughter', they were, I think, doing much the same thing that Plato was doing: they were interpreting the facts of life as they saw them, only with a deeper insight even than Plato's. (This insight we call inspiration.) They, too, saw that to keep the law of God in a wicked world brought suffering with it; but they saw also that such suffering might be borne in such a way that it would in the end be a means of bringing the wicked to repentance and to salvation: 'by His stripes we are healed.'

Now Jesus Christ, when he came, fulfilled the ideal set forth by Plato and by the prophets as no one else ever fulfilled it before or since. He embodied in Himself the most perfect righteousness that any one could conceive, and His whole life was perfectly devoted to it. He went about doing good without any of that regard for self which in all of us limits the good that we are prepared to do.

The world into which He came had much evil in it. The good that He did came in conflict with the evil. What was likely to happen? You do not need to be a fatalist to say, 'Christ *had* to suffer.'

But if Christ had to suffer, then somebody or other must be the agent in causing His sufferings, not because they were singled out by fate for this sinister part, but because they were in a position where the line of conduct they chose had direct effects upon Him; and because they were capable of the kind of conduct that caused Him to suffer.

Let us be clear that Pilate and Judas were not alto-

gether bad men, nor even worse men than a great many of their contemporaries, or of ourselves. Pilate had good deeds to his credit. (Among other things, he had given Jerusalem for the first time a really efficient water-supply.) He was no doubt a stern and harsh governor. He thought it was his duty to be so. He was responsible to the Emperor for a rebellious province. Any one can see that when Jesus was brought before him he tried hard to do the right thing. He failed because (like many of us) he had done wrong things in the past which made it extremely difficult to do the right thing now; and because (again like many of us) he was just not brave enough to take the risk. If we look deeply enough, we can see that his act of injustice (which he saw to be such) was inevitable—not because he was fated so to act, but because of what he was, and of what he had done in the past. If all through his life he had been more honest, just, and brave, less anxious for his own skin and the saving of his face, he need not have been afraid to do the right now and take the consequences. But of how many of us could the same be said?

Judas is a puzzling case. Do you suppose that when he left all to follow Jesus, like Peter and James and John; when he shared His toils and trials for so many months—he was all the time nursing black treachery in his heart? I do not think so. Judas was capable of fine things. But there was a bad streak in him. We cannot pretend to know by what means his mind got so twisted that he entertained the thought of treachery. But we can be sure that he must have allowed himself to dwell upon dark thoughts of his own until he came to feel that the only thing to do was to betray his Master. He cannot have done such a thing lightly; and I do not think he did it just for thirty pieces of silver: it went deeper. He committed the crime, but there was enough good left in Judas to bring him to an appalling remorse for what he had done.

The whole thing was horrible; and yet who knows which of us might be capable of such treachery if the temptation were strong enough?

Let us put it in this way: when it came to the point, Pilate and Judas did what they did because of what they were: if they were bound to do it, they were bound only by their own characters and their previous thoughts and actions. If Pilate had been brave and honest, if Judas had been true to his own highest ideals, there was no power that could have made them act so sinister a part.

If they had not played that part, I think we must say that somebody, in some way or other, would have compassed the death of Christ. Things being as they were, the righteous Servant of God must needs suffer. And Pilate and Judas were after all no more than the agents of a great mass of hatred and evil with which Jesus was surrounded—the jealousy of the priests, the fanaticism of the Scribes and Pharisees, the worldly aims of the populace, the violence of the Zealots.

And when we come to think of it, the evil that we condemn in all these people is the evil that is in ourselves. If we blame Pilate and Judas, or those who stood behind them, for the crime of the Crucifixion, we blame ourselves. Supposing you or I had been present on that black Friday: on which side should we have shouted? Knowing what we now know, it is easy to persuade ourselves that we should have stood by Jesus. But if we had done so, we should have been very bright exceptions. Everybody who counted was against Him. Even Peter denied Him, and His own disciples forsook Him and fled. I wonder if we should really have behaved any better.

Now as I see it, one great effect of the death of Christ is just to bring home to us the real nature of the evil things that are in us—like selfishness and pride and prejudice and jealousy and cowardice. These are in us as they were in Pilate and Judas and the rest. In them we see our

own sins projected like a moving picture on the screen of history. If we realize that, it shakes us pretty rudely out of any self-satisfaction.

If that were all, then the story of the Cross of Christ would hardly be 'Gospel', that is, good news; it would be very bad news indeed. It is as though the Judge of all the world were putting on the black cap to pronounce our sentence.

But the crime of the Crucifixion is on the other side of it the most magnificent example of self-sacrifice. Jesus went to His death in a way which shows that the evil in the world had no power whatever over His spirit. The suffering of a man is not simply a physical fact (like the suffering of a wild animal): it is also a spiritual fact. And from that point of view the important thing is the way in which the suffering is borne. We have accounts in history of other crucifixions than that of Jesus. In some cases the sufferer employed his last hours in hurling bitter curses at his foes. Jesus prayed for them to the last. And as we look back over His life we see that this was the spirit that was revealed all through it. He lived and died in selfless love for others. All the malice and hatred with which He was met did nothing to diminish that love.

We have seen that Jesus fulfilled in His life and death the prophets' ideal of the righteous Servant of God. But He went a good deal further than any ideal that the prophets had formed. His 'righteousness' was a greater thing than they had conceived: it was selfless love, constantly active for the good of men, bringing healing and forgiveness and the power of a better life. Because of this love for men He could not resent or resist or avenge the wrong they did Him.

When a man suffers wrong in this way, then the suffering which he endures is transformed by his patience, courage, and self-sacrifice into a power for good; not because suffering in itself has that virtue, but because the

spirit that suffers in that way has triumphed over the evil. Thus in the death of Christ we see not defeat but victory.

This brings me to a further point. I have been discussing the question in what sense Christ *had* to suffer. Suppose we now put it in another way: did God decree that Christ should suffer, and if so, in what sense?

I suggest the answer: what God designed was not the sufferings which befell Christ: what He designed was the kind of life that Christ lived, and the spirit in which His sufferings were endured. Let me go back to that idea of Plato's, that if a perfectly righteous man should appear, he would be the victim of unrighteous men. Now what God designed was the coming of the perfectly righteous Man. As Plato and the prophets saw, His appearance in the world led to His suffering and death: the world being what it is, that was inevitable. But what God designed was something better than any prophet dreamed. He sent into the world 'the Son of His love'. He sent Christ, who embodied in Himself the spirit of love, which is the most divine thing in the universe; for 'God is love'. And Christ so lived that this divine love found expression in all that He said and did; and when the inevitable suffering came upon Him, which must come upon the good man in a wicked world, the same divine love found expression in His suffering and death.

It is in this sense that the Cross was divinely appointed: not that God designed the outward event, which was the crime of men—the crime of us all; but that God revealed Himself in the spirit that bore the Cross; revealed Himself as love, which offers forgiveness for the crime of men, that is, for the sins of us all.

C. H. DODD

Why did Christ Work Miracles? Did He need to?

SOME of us can remember the time when there were no aeroplanes, no X-rays, no wireless sets. Every invention and every new discovery calls upon our mind to make room for new facts. It was once regarded as quite absurd to suppose that swallows could fly from Africa to this country in the spring and back again in the autumn. It was found easier to believe that they spent the winter buried in the mud of fens and marshes. When the facts of migration were established, men had to make room in their minds for this strange truth, that birds can pilot themselves, on their long journey, by a mysterious, but unerring instinct. We must not lightly say 'Impossible?' It is supposed, in some quarters, that certain people have a peculiar power, by which they are able to make cups and jars and other solid things float in the air. If this is proved to be true, our minds will require to make room for the new fact. Many things, long considered incredible, are true. In our voyage in search of truth, facts are the infallible stars.

When we read the New Testament, we find a number of men and women trying to make room in their minds for a new fact. Jesus has appeared in the world. There are many mysterious things about His birth and life and death and resurrection, but most mysterious of all is Jesus Himself. We express the mystery by saying, 'He is the Son of God'. In His own time, people found it easier to convey the same thought by telling of the wonderful things which He did. We call them 'miracles'.

What is a miracle? 1. We might say, 'It is something which science cannot explain.' A hundred years ago, if a man in Edinburgh had seen something happening at

that moment in London, he would have declared, 'This is a miracle!' Yet to-day we do not speak of television as miraculous. We might put it this way, that things go on being 'miracles' for centuries, and then suddenly cease to be 'miracles'. It might be better, then, to alter our definition and to say, 'A miracle is something which science cannot *yet* explain.' Even to-day science does not know everything. (It is quite possible, for example, that the nucleus of an atom is 'as complex and as thickly populated as the city of London'. There may be a whole world of activity of which we know nothing.) It is certain that there are many facts waiting to be discovered. For all of them our minds will have to make room. Many of them we are probably trying to explain now in ways just as quaint as that of the Arab who was asked what the telegraph was, and replied, 'Suppose that you have a very long, thin dog, so long that its head is in Damascus and its tail here in Beirut. When you pull its tail here in Beirut, the dog squeals in Damascus. That is the telegraph.'

2. Since science has much still to discover, it might be better to say, 'A miracle is something which is contrary to the laws of nature.' We are not now using purely negative evidence, which may be upset by the discovery of a single new fact, but positive evidence, which has a mass of facts to support it. We are able to tell superstitious people that spilling salt does *not* bring bad luck. The idea that it does will not *fit in* with what we know already about God and His love. In the same way, it might be said that the laws of nature are there, whether science has discovered them or not, and that the laws of nature cannot contradict one another. And that would be true.

But it would not be the whole truth. If it were, we might go on to say, 'A man cannot walk on water.' That would be falling into the mistake of saying 'Impossible!' and then, perhaps, discovering some new power which explained everything quite simply. But there is some-

thing even more important to notice. Whenever we speak of 'a man' we are dealing with that which is not controlled by the 'laws of nature'. Lord Kelvin said, 'Every action of free-will is a miracle to physical, chemical, and mathematical science.' We may say, quite accurately, that every movement we make alters the world of nature. When an engine strikes the wagon at the end of a goods-train, the bump goes from wagon to wagon, right to the end of the row. It may be very slight when it reaches the last wagon, but it is never reduced to nothing, however long the train may be. Move your hand, ever so slightly, and the whole of the earth's atmosphere is disturbed. The whole world of nature has to readjust itself.

All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linkèd are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.

Though the readjustment may be infinitesimal, we may not disregard it. Among the Alps, a single shout has been known to set free an avalanche. A tiny readjustment may have profound consequences.

We have spoken of things which science cannot *yet* explain. Here, in human wills, we have that which science can *never* explain.

Science has done very much to trace the course of evolution, but the fact of life, of intelligence, of the rise of organic creatures from an inorganic world, of the appearance of man in the animal kingdom—these are all beyond the power of science to explain. This reminds us that we may frequently be forced to *fit in* facts, without being able to explain them. It is the facts which alone can give the explanation of the rest.

3. But we are now reminded of the existence of a

science of the human mind. Our definition might be altered, therefore, to read, 'A miracle, if it is authentic, is something which implies powers, hitherto unknown, in the human personality.' The extent of this realm has also been considerably reduced in our time, for, in the facts of telepathy and the powers which the mind is found to possess for the cure of bodily illnesses, we see things which we should no longer wish to describe as 'miraculous'.

4. Thus we turn our attention away from that which, in all probability, will some day be explained by the science of the human mind, and direct it to something which *can never be explained* in terms of human personality. This is what we call a 'miracle' when we are speaking from the side of religion and the Christian faith. Just as the laws of nature are independent of our discovery of them, so the activity of God is there, whether or not our human personalities co-operate with it. When we say 'miracle', we mean that God is at work. And by that we do not mean simply that God is working in the familiar ways, sustaining the universe and inspiring human personalities. We mean that He is at work in special ways. We might call it God's free-will. Just as, when we ourselves act, we change the course of nature, without, however, breaking any of the laws of nature, so God intervenes for higher ends—it may be for the relief of suffering, for the advancement of goodness, for the salvation of men—and He does so without making nature contradict itself. What we find at work is a law, *within* nature, which is *higher* than nature. And this, as might be expected, is observed most in real crises of history and in response to conspicuous faith.

Belief in miracles is simply our confession that God can do new things.

Why did Jesus do miracles? We read of times when He refused. The story of the Temptation in the wilderness shows that Jesus would not consider the possibility of

using His power to do what we might call 'conjuring-tricks'. He would not perform wonders simply in order to prove His power. Belief, if it had been forced in that way, would not have been worthy belief. Nor were His miracles intended as signs to establish the truth of His teaching. We are not to think of them as a kind of bugle sounded by a man to call attention to his message. If the miracles had been intended as signs of the power of God, and nothing more, they would have appeared where faith was lowest. On the contrary, they were part of the message itself. He performed the miracles in order to reveal what God was like. Here was a case in which the human personality was not weak nor erring; instead, it co-operated perfectly, and in all things, with the activity of God. In the miracles of Jesus, therefore, we see the *true* order of things breaking in. We begin to realize that the obstacles and troubles of the world were not meant to be. Jesus set Himself to remove them. The only condition was that men should co-operate with Him. That is what we mean when we say that miracles are granted only in response to men's faith. Men can always have the old, bad order if they desire it or if they do not believe in any other, but God wants them to have the new, divine order.

Did Jesus need to perform the miracles? I think we must acknowledge the possibility that some of the stories in the Gospels are misunderstandings or misinterpretations of what actually took place. Jesus was above His reporters. It is very probable that some of the miracle-stories were originally parables, which have been mistaken for actual events; others were the reflection of prophecies in the Old Testament; others, again, spiritual experiences of the disciples. But many of them are clearly the straightforward account of what Jesus did when He was confronted with trouble or sickness among men and women. He always takes it for granted that disease is part of the

kingdom of evil, and He sets Himself to remove it. 'Jesus, in fact, seems to have felt towards physical and mental disease precisely as every good modern physician feels towards it.' In answer to our question, Did He need to perform miracles? we say: He could not help performing them: He loved mankind so well.

Running through all that has gone before is the answer to the other question, *How did He work miracles?* The answer is that His perfect life on the earth revealed the Divine, the true supernatural; not only God's Power and Love, but also God's Liberty to help men and women in whatever need He found them.

Can we still expect the performance of miracles in our own day?

We may answer that question first with a caution. We cannot expect the followers of Jesus to do what He did. They have not His faith in God, nor His power of imparting faith to those who are in need. But we must answer it, secondly, with an affirmation. Healing miracles, in the sense of works which cannot be explained in terms of human personality alone, are by no means uncommon. The conquest of many forms of bodily and mental disease has been made possible only through the courage and devotion of Christian doctors and surgeons, often at the cost of their lives. We read, for example, of a missionary doctor in China. His people are dying of a strange plague. Deliberately, one day, he goes into the laboratory and swallows some of the germs. The progress of the disease will be carefully watched, and, even though he should lose his own life, his action will save the lives of thousands of his people. In sacrifice we are confronted with that which is more than human.

Unfortunately we live in a time when faith in God is not the warm and living thing which it was in the days of the New Testament. We do not expect great things from God, and the result is that we do not receive what would otherwise come our way. To the blind men whose eyes

He opened, Jesus said, 'According to your faith be it unto you.' Our age may not be an age of great faith, but ours is not to be taken as the standard for all time.

When men become more like Christ they will have a greater share of the powers of Christ.

EDGAR P. DICKIE

Can you Prove that the Story of the Resurrection is True?

'CAN we prove that the Story of the Resurrection is true?' Well, if you want what is called pure scientific truth, we cannot. And there is great gain in saying so at once. But let us hasten to add that the whole purpose of the Resurrection was to convince us of a spiritual Truth: and spiritual truths are not scientifically demonstrable. Spiritual Truths are matters of Faith: Pure Science oversteps its bounds when it exceeds a summation of facts. But if, by the question, you mean you are 'worried about the Resurrection', perhaps we can help.

Most folks who are worried about the Resurrection have done a bit of reading. They have read that 'these things happened' in a very credulous age, when miracle was commonly accepted. They have read, too, that Christianity, in claiming that its central figure rose from the dead, is only claiming what many pagan religions had already claimed for their particular Gods. They, therefore, assume at once that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was just another of these. To put it bluntly, they think it was a hoax spread abroad as a legend to suit the purpose of the early Church. Now the trouble with these 'scientifically minded' young people, who swallow that explanation, is that they fail rather lamentably to be scientific. If they are going to dabble in this comparison between Christianity and other religions—that is, explore the science of Comparative Religions—they must obey the first rule of any science, which is to consider *all* the facts. And if you explore all the facts, you find there is no real parallel at all. Certainly there were ancient religions of the East that claimed that their God had risen

from the dead; but if you examine them you will find that they were always, so to speak, putting the claim farther and farther back. It was always 'thousands of years ago' that it happened. But this is not true at all of Christianity. We can date, as a scientific fact, when Jesus lived on earth, and we can date, as a scientific fact, when His Church was growing by leaps and bounds—inspired in its splendid faith solely by a conviction of the Resurrection. And the time that elapsed between His death and the commencement of His Church is so short that it precludes absolutely the possibility that the vitality of the Church in the first century was based on a 'hoax legend'.

You try to get together a secret society to-day, and spread the hoax that you have seen a dead man rise out of a grave. If you all kept the secret and spread it sedulously it *might* happen that in perhaps a hundred years folks would believe what once you had invented. But could you for a moment suggest that you would get folk to believe it within sixty days? Yet it was in something like that time that the Church was being founded, solely on a belief in the Resurrection! Indeed, we can go farther. Could you get folk to believe it, in so short a time, if in the beginning you were not inclined to believe it *yourself*?

Here again, if we are to be scientific, we must sedulously take account of all the facts. If the Scripture record worries you, you must at least be careful to take account of all that Scripture says. And Scripture tells us that even the followers of our Lord were not expecting the Resurrection early on Easter morning. 'When they heard He was alive and had been seen of Mary,' says the Marcan record, 'they disbelieved.' The Gospel of Luke is even stronger and says of the first report of the Resurrection: '... these words appeared in their sight as idle talk.'

Whatever else we can make of this, at least it proves to us that credulous as was the age, they were not ashamed—in this regard—to record their incredulity: at least

these words would not have been likely to be put into the record had the inner circle of the very early Church in fact been endeavouring to create a legend!

Indeed, this scientific line of approach to the Gospel story leads us to a further consideration. It is astonishing the number of people who tell you they cannot accept the Resurrection story, and when probed for their reason, at once reveal that 'what they cannot accept' are aspects of the story which the Gospels at least have never asked men to accept! They come out with such statements as 'I can't believe that Jesus was seen as an ordinary man walking about on Easter morning. . . . I cannot believe every one saw Him'. Now, nowhere in the Gospel story is it claimed that every one saw Him: nor do they claim that He was seen as an ordinary man. There were, in fact, only three recorded occasions on Easter Day when He was seen: and each record has some element of mystery. He was seen of Mary . . . but at first she took Him for the gardener, and spoke to Him as to a gardener, till He revealed His full personality . . . even then He said: 'Touch Me not.' Again, when first He appeared to the disciples, who were together in a room, the door being shut, 'they were affrighted, supposing they beheld a Spirit'. Most significant of all, He walked and talked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus for several miles without their recognizing that He it was who accompanied them. True the Gospel record makes it clear that He was more than a Spirit, He said so to the disciples; and at the end of the journey to Emmaus, He broke bread with them. But His appearances were not ordinary. They were, what the Church has always claimed, something unique.

And indeed, for men of faith, it is only along this line that the Resurrection story reveals its true significance. All the Church has ever claimed is what emerges clearly in the Gospels—namely, that He appeared only to those

who in some sense were waiting for Him and seeking to do His Will. It was to Mary, who was *seeking* Him, that He vouchsafed His presence. The disciples, before His Death, He had told 'to keep together'. And it was only when they had *the courage to keep together*—and it needed courage—that He revealed Himself on Easter evening. There is no record that Jesus revealed Himself to any of the disciples while they still 'dismissed the tale as idle talk'! And on the road to Emmaus 'their eyes were holden that they did not know Him' until it was towards evening, and they asked the Stranger to accept their hospitality and to spend the night. *When they stopped asking questions, that is, and did the Christian thing . . . behold, He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.*

Certainly these are not proofs 'that the story of the Resurrection is true'. But is there not at least emerging a very different Resurrection story than the rather fictitious one that so many minds create for themselves, and then get worried because they cannot believe it? The ultimate proof of the truth of the Resurrection comes only to those who humbly accept the possibility of such appearances as have been recorded.

But there is a final, scientific, and most important aid to faith. It is unscientific to rest the whole case on the Gospel story, and the inductive approach from the experience of the centuries is of profound significance. Many of the so-called 'proved facts of science' to-day rest entirely on what are called inductive theories, because men are dealing with the kind of fact that is not capable of complete proof. If, in some realm of science (runs the inductive method), a sufficiently large number of experiments all point unerringly to one assumption: that assumption becomes for the scientist 'the fact' on which he works until he can find a better one. And an inductive proof of the Resurrection is simply that an unlimited number of 'experiments in living' have been

made, through the Christian centuries, based on the assumption that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And every one of these experiments, when truly made, has so far pointed unerringly to the truth of the assumption.

Whenever men 'ask' honestly, as the disciples were asking on the road to Emmaus, and add to their inquiry the grace of Christian charity—He is given to them. Whenever folk seek, as Mary sought, He is found of them. Whenever men knock, as the disciples were knocking on the door of truth as they assembled on Easter evening, the door is opened to them. The universal experience of faithful men unerringly points to the truth of the assumption.

The assumption is, of course, Pure Shining Miracle—That it was God who 'begat us again to a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. Nor do any who have found Him require to explore any other assumption: for there is no better one than that!

GEORGE F. MACLEOD

In What Way is Christ my Saviour?

The Redemption

IT is not easy to answer shortly the question, What is the Redemption? You know how many answers can be given to another question which is often asked and discussed: Why did we join in the Great War? Some will say, because we were bound in honour to do so; others that we were fighting for democracy or freedom, and others again that we were forced into it to save our own existence or our own interests. Now scarcely any of these answers are altogether false; in fact they help each other out, the probable truth being that our motives were complicated. One no doubt dominated, but it does not tell the whole story. Similarly with the Redemption. It is so rich in love and wisdom that a simple explanation won't suffice. There are people who sneer at it and call the story childish or unworthy of God, and it is best not to listen to them, because they have not tried to understand it. If I try to explain it by story or parable, remember that they are only to serve as clues.

In the Bible our Lord is called the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and the prophet Isaias saw the Son of God carrying our sorrows and wounded for our iniquities. We had gone astray and the Lord laid on Him the wickedness of us all. Suppose that a gang of bandits in the United States were caught and brought to justice. They had taken many for a ride, smashed up families, kidnapped children, and shot down many innocent persons. Their brutality, it was felt, must receive its deserts, and even if one of the judges were the father of a man in the gang, he would feel forced to put aside the feelings of a father in order to administer justice. In other words, unless such blackguards as these are punished, we

should feel that something was wrong with the world and with justice. Next, let us suppose that the President of the United States has a son who is the finest type of man and at the time engaged on a work of national importance with a picked body of companions. An appeal is made by the gang from the verdict to the President and his son comes to hear of it. He straightway obtains an interview with the criminals and he says to them. 'Look here, I don't believe that you are absolutely rotten and I will do my very best to help you. I can take you on under me in the work I do, which is very hard and important, on condition that you swear to give up entirely the life you have been living and suggest yourselves some punishment which will show the world your regrets for the past and your good intentions. I am prepared to trust you to the extent of going guarantee for your good behaviour and I will persuade my father to agree to this.'

The son was an irresistible pleader and won his way with his father, and at first the gang, thinking they had got off on very easy terms and were now in for a soft job, played up. But they all hated hard work, and their leaders, the sort that would have murdered their mothers for a dollar, soon persuaded the rest to put the blame for every inconvenience on the son. One day they turned on him and smashed him up and then made off with him. They reckoned on using him as a ransom and so saving their skins. I will not go on with the story, as it has served its purpose. There is a parable in the New Testament like to it of the householder and the husbandmen. The gang are all mankind, and if this seems exaggerated, remember that people like ourselves put Christ to death, that we human beings have made the world the unhappy place it is, and that the poverty around us, the immorality, the wars between classes and between nations are our work. If such evil sickens us what must it appear to the Author of all good, in the light of His perfect purity and before

His justice. God would not be God if He did not show His abomination of evil and vindicate His justice, and it is this justice which appears first in the Redemption. The marvel is in the way that God who is also love so works that justice and love kiss. Love brings the very Son of God to be a man with men, one of us, who can appeal to our love and also be our one boast before the justice seat of God. He identifies Himself with man, and now a man can say to God, 'Behold a true human son who loves you as you would be loved and begs in return a love from you for all mankind, his brothers.' As in the story, He is our guarantee; He is prepared to make atonement. And what an atonement! Instead of being grateful we hated Him and hung Him up upon a tree. One might think that love had failed and that now justice would follow with punishment and doom. But out of the very worst of evil springs a marvellous good, and the justice finds its victim in the sufferings of that Son of Man, who beseeches God that His pain may be taken as sufficient sacrifice for the sins of those who slew Him and the whole of mankind. Such inimitable love is irresistible. Justice is satisfied; the greatest act of affection that has ever been offered to God and to us is combined in that willing sacrifice of Christ. He is now the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Being lifted up to die on a gibbet He draws all to Himself, and as St. Paul says in a magnificent image, He blotted out the handwriting of the sentence of our condemnation, nailing it to the cross in His own flesh.

Here is part of the secret of the Redemption. There is more in it than this, for He so identified Himself with us by love that what He suffered we ought to have suffered and what He became in the Resurrection we actually become, heirs of Christ and co-heirs, the sons of God, flushed, so to speak, though we feel it not, with His risen glory and His divine strength, vine branches of the vine of God, 'that the love wherewith thou hast loved me,

may be in them and I in them'. This is almost too sublime to speak of, and reaches out to the mysterious truth of the Mystical Body of His Church and the Holy Eucharist. But I hope that you see how God had to be just and how by a wondrous stratagem He combined this justice with love; that this was done by the Son of God becoming man, acting in our name and turning the rejection of himself by us into a sacrifice of infinite power to God for us. 'By his bruises we are healed.' God suffers the penalty of evil done and pours out upon us the love due to the self-sacrifice of the one guiltless man who was also God.

M. C. D'ARCY

Are We to Believe that Christ will actually Come Back on this Earth Again?

IF this question—which interests many minds—is to receive its due share of thoughtful consideration, it will be advisable, at the outset, to examine what the Christian wisdom of the past has to say on the subject. Here we naturally turn, first of all, to the great Creeds and Confessions of the Church, in which we have condensed statements of the Christian faith as held throughout the ages, and we shall inquire what these Creeds have laid down as matters of right and necessary belief with regard to the Second Coming of Christ. Next, we shall take the evidence of the New Testament, which is the basis of the Creeds, and consider what conclusions are to be drawn from its statements. Finally, and in the light of such historical evidence, we shall try to give an answer to the question before us.

I. When we turn to the great Creeds and Confessions of Christianity, we find the greatest reserve upon everything connected with the Second Coming of Christ, except upon one point. All of these Creeds without exception affirm that Christ will come again as Judge of all men, both the living and the dead, and this has always been a vital element of the Christian faith. But none of the Creeds has anywhere, so far as I know, insisted upon anything being necessarily believed with regard to the outward or visible circumstances, or place, or precise moment of the Coming. The document which we know as the Apostles' Creed, speaking of Christ as sitting at the right hand of God, says simply that 'From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead'. It is to be noted, however, that, in saying that Christ will judge the *dead* as well as the living, this Creed like all the others

implies that a resurrection of the dead will have taken place, which means that the Coming Again of Christ, if we think of the earth as the place of its manifestation, will introduce a set of conditions or circumstances to which there is no analogy in this world as we know it. To this extent the Return of Christ will, strictly speaking, be not to the earth as we know it, but to a transfigured earth, to which the dead have been summoned back from their graves. Such a condition of things is necessarily beyond our power to imagine or to place before our eyes, and just for this reason it will not be right to believe that Christ will appear again in history under any form which we can connect with the existing arrangements of the world.

But while confessional Christianity thus implies a new or transfigured earth as the scene of the final event of our Lord's Coming, its emphasis, as already said, is not on place, or outward or visible circumstance, but on the thought that Christ comes to exercise judgement. The simple statement of the early Creeds that 'He shall come to judge the quick and the dead' recurs in all the later Confessions, Orthodox Eastern, Roman, and Protestant, without any essential addition.

It would appear, then, that the Christian wisdom of the past has never considered it a necessary part of a Christian's faith to affirm anything about the Second Coming of Christ, save on one point. We are to keep Christ's Judgement-throne before our eyes, to prepare ourselves, to repent, to watch and pray. Apart from this, and the certain assurance that a blessed life in Christ's presence will be the portion of the faithful, and eternal loss and exclusion the portion of the impenitent, the Creeds have affirmed nothing.

II. When from the Creeds we go back to the original sources of the Christian revelation in the New Testament, we find that there too the main emphasis is always upon the moral aspect of the Coming Again of Christ, not upon

its outward or visible nature. Certainly the New Testament employs much pictorial language with reference to the Advent and to the life of the world to come, and here again the emphasis upon the heavenly 'glory' of the appearing Christ, and the invariable assumption that the dead will arise at His Coming, show that the manifestation, if it is thought of as taking place on earth, implies conditions which lie altogether beyond our present terrestrial experience. But the central thought is that Christ comes to bring salvation to the humble and the penitent, those who have loved and followed Him, and to drive from His presence all who have remained impenitent and disobedient. This is the only thing we are given certainly to know.

Thus, if we take such passages as Mark viii. 38, Matt. xvi. 28, Mark xiii. 26 ff., xiv. 62, Matt. xxv. 31 ff., xvi. 27, we shall find that, while they all speak of the Son of Man as returning visibly, attended by the angels and in the glory of the Father, the purpose of the words is to bring out the critical importance of men coming now into the right moral relation to Christ. Our Lord speaks of His own generation as destined to behold His coming (Mark xiv. 62, Matt. xvi. 28): He refers not to a far-distant future event, but to something which was immediately to follow, and if we lay stress on the *literal* terms of His prediction, we must say that in the literal sense it was not fulfilled. This should be a warning against laying too much stress on the outward or visible form of the Coming of Jesus Christ. The Christian Church has carried forward the thought of His Coming, but the things which it has felt it desirable to stress are the things which Jesus also stressed, viz. that His Coming means blessing and joy and everlasting life to the faithful, but unending loss and doom to the wicked.¹ In fact, Jesus comes 'to render unto every man according to his deeds'.²

¹ Matt. xxv. 31 ff.; Mark xiii. 26 ff.

² Matt. xvi. 27.

The same two aspects of the Second Coming, viz. (1) its supernatural aspect, by which both the event itself, as an object of Christian faith, and the conditions which it inaugurates are lifted above all ordinary earthly experience, and (2) its moral aspect, by which it brings our lives to the final test of the Will of God as declared by Christ, appear everywhere together in the New Testament. For example, Acts i. 11 refers to the *glory* of the returning Christ: as it was in the glorified body of His resurrection that Christ ascended into heaven, so it is in the same glorified body that He comes back. In 1 Thess. iv. 15-17 St. Paul says that at the coming back of Christ the faithful departed will arise from their graves and have a share with the living in the glory of that time. And in 1 Cor. xv. 50-2 he makes it clear that not only will those who sleep in Christ be raised but those who are alive will undergo a supernatural *transformation*. 'Behold,' he writes, 'I tell you a Mystery: we shall not all sleep (i.e. die), but we shall all be changed.' So the Coming Again of Christ brings about an entire change of all earthly conditions. And, for this, Christians are to prepare themselves by living earnest lives.¹

III. It seems clear, then, that the Coming Again of Christ, if we should think of this earth as the scene, will not be to this earth as we know it but to a supernaturally renewed and transformed earth. The New Testament and the Creeds certainly connect the manifestation with the earth, for the earth was then supposed to be the centre or ground of the Universe, but, even so, a transmutation of all earthly things is presupposed. The reign of death will be over. The grave will give back its own. There will be a final separation of the righteous from the wicked. The servants of Christ will enter through Him into undimmed and unbroken friendship with God. If all this is conceived as taking place on earth, it is on an earth that is

¹ 1 Thess. v. 1-10; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Rom. xiii. 11-14, &c.

no longer capable of being distinguished in thought from heaven. As regards, however, the earth being thought of as the scene, it is wise to reflect that the truth of a prophecy or of a religious idea is not finally bound up with its literal terms or its imaginative setting. For example, our Lord prophesied with regard to Herod's temple in Jerusalem that 'Not one stone shall be left upon another, which shall not be thrown down'.¹ This prediction was *essentially* fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the temple was destroyed, never to be built again. But it was not fulfilled to the *letter*, because a few stones belonging to the foundations of Herod's temple survived the catastrophe, and still remain in position. So we ought not to lay stress upon all the features or details of the prophecies of the Second Coming. Our astronomical knowledge has been vastly increased since the first century, and we now know the earth to be not the central stage of the world, but a tiny speck in a Universe of worlds. It is not, therefore, necessary to think of this earth, or indeed of any material sphere of existence, as being the final stage of the drama of Divine redemption. On the other hand, we cannot think of the triumph of Christ except as involving judgement on us and on all life lived in this world. Fellowship with Christ in the light of God is the only possible way in which we can conceive the ultimate goal of the life of our spirits. Hence, we must hold to the spiritual aspect of the Second Coming, whether or not we can make other assertions about it. We feel, with one of the New Testament writers, that in many respects the nature of the Life Hereafter has not been revealed, but equally we must feel with him the certainty that that Life can only be conceived in terms of spiritual likeness to Christ: 'We know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'²

WILLIAM MANSON

¹ Mark xii. 2.² 1 John iii. 2.

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WILLIAM MANSON

¹ Mark xiii. 2.

² 1 John iii. 2.

What is Meant by the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

IN the early days of Christianity, when new Churches were growing up in many towns and cities of Asia Minor and Greece, and even in the capital of the Roman Empire itself, St. Paul and other leaders found that the best way of keeping in touch with places which they could only visit occasionally was by writing from time to time to give advice and guidance and help. Some of these letters have come down to us as the Epistles, which make up part of the New Testament, and we find in them many words which were then, and are still, constantly used by Christians. The question we have before us has to do with one of them: 'What is meant by the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ?' We find these words (or others very like them) in almost every Epistle, and very often they are used, like a kind of greeting, at the beginning or the end. Instead of hoping that those to whom they write are well, or using some other conventional expression, the writers say, quite simply, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' We may be sure they felt it was the best greeting they could send, and that they would use the best word they knew to express it, so let us think, to begin with, about the word 'grace' itself.

What 'grace' had meant before Christ came. When people, long before Christianity began, wished to describe the beauty or charm of something which gave them pleasure, they often spoke of its 'grace'. It might be the perfect rhythm of a movement, or the loveliness of a picture, or the 'gracefulness' of a tree in spring-time. Everything which delighted the eye, or satisfied the desire for beauty, had 'grace' in it. Still earlier, stories had been told of the

three 'Graces', who gave to life the joy and beauty without which it would be empty and dull enough—the 'Graces' who had been worshipped as goddesses of the charming and the lovely at many a festival. But, for the Christians, nothing could ever be so wonderful as the love that came to them in Jesus Christ. Nothing could be so beautiful—so satisfying—so full of 'grace' as His gift of Himself. They must use the best word they know in speaking of their Lord, but the very word itself must be enriched and made new, because it tells now of something never known before. Just as the Christians' lives have been changed by Jesus Christ, so the familiar word has gained new beauty and meaning since it has come to tell of the wonder and joy, the happiness and hope, that He brought.

'Grace' a reminder of our Saviour's greatness. When Christians greeted one another with words like these, they were recalling the honour and power and majesty of their Lord, for a gracious act is always that of one who stoops to help. We speak of the king's grace, and of our gracious king, meaning that the sovereign from his throne gives himself to his subjects as he seeks to serve them. It is because he is greater than they that he can be gracious, for grace comes always from above, and thus in the royal title itself (as on our coins) there are the words *dei gratia* (by the grace of God) in acknowledgement of the higher Power on which the kingship itself depends. When we read in the Old Testament of 'covenants' between man and man, it is always the stronger who covenants with the weaker, and when we read of God making a covenant with men, it is by grace that He, in His greatness, condescends to deal with them as He does. 'He reaches down to raise me', writes one of the Psalmists, thinking of God's grace.¹ So, in the New Testament, 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' was a reminder always, as it is

¹ Psalm xviii. 16, Moffatt.

to us still, of our Saviour's greatness and of how He came from above. For our sakes He set aside His glory, and though He was rich, He became poor. It is in grace that He comes to dwell with men and to be their Saviour. As often as they use the word 'grace' Christians tell one another again the wonderful truth that it was the Son of God who came into the world, not with pomp and splendour, but having nowhere to lay His head—that it was the King of Glory who was crucified with a crown of thorns upon His head.

'Grace', the story of how Christ came and what His coming means. It was no grudging, hesitant giving that caused the Christians thus to rejoice. What they, and we, so deeply need—what only He can give—Jesus has freely offered. What none can do for himself Jesus has done for all. He came in grace to the people of His time—to men and women who wished to live to the full and had not found the secret of life, as well as to the disheartened and the sorrowful and the suffering—and He comes still in grace to do wondrous things for us. Because He brought God's grace to men He went forth, bearing a Cross, to die at Calvary, that there might be the certainty of forgiveness and new hope for the world. He came again in grace, a risen Saviour, to His followers, promising them victory through His triumphant love. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the barrier of sin which separates from God has been broken for ever, and for those who, by faith, accept what He has done for them, the present and future alike are full of gladness and of hope. It is no light thing to speak of living 'in this year of grace'—for it means that we are alive in a world that has been different since Jesus came.

No one deserves the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Christian writers, over nineteen hundred years ago, used the word 'grace' not only to tell of Christ's greatness and of what He had done for them, but to say something about them—

selves which it is never easy for any one to say. They meant that they did not in the least deserve such love or such a gift. It was, in the truest sense, an 'act of grace'. Long before, God chose Israel to be His people and led them out of Egypt, not because they were strong or powerful or even righteous. No people could have seemed less hopeful or deserving, yet God chose them in spite of their sin, their lack of common spirit, their perversity and rebelliousness, and, as they looked back, they came to see that all that had been done for them was the outcome of His grace. What was true then was true in a deeper sense for those in New Testament times who knew that God had loved them long before they loved Him, and that it was when they were still sinners that Christ died for them. Why they should be thus sought out, why those who deserve nothing should receive everything freely, they cannot explain, any more than we. Grace, and grace alone, brought them, and brings us, within the circle of the love of God, who still deals with men and women as a Father with His children, and says to them, 'All that I have is yours.'

Receiving the gift of grace. When men find themselves face to face with this amazing love there is but one thing that they can do. They must receive. Humbly, and with a sense of unworthiness, they must take what is freely offered. At the Jubilee day gifts were handed, in the king's name, to a number of children, who received them gladly. They did not say, 'We will not take these, for we have not earned them.' Still less did they think, 'The king has done this as a reward for our special loyalty.' They were gracious gifts—received with wonder, perhaps, and certainly with gladness. We are so apt to calculate, in our giving, whether or not the gift is merited, that we find it hard to think of a royal gift, quite undeserved, simply to be accepted. We hesitate to come empty-handed. We wish to be independent—too proud

to take. Yet there is only one way—we must receive this gift of grace.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.

The New Testament writers knew it: true Christians have always known it: we must lay aside our pride and take what grace alone can give. The words of Great-heart, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, are well worth our remembering. 'It is my duty to distrust my own ability, that I may have reliance on Him who is stronger than all.'

Our gratitude for grace so freely given and our loyalty to the Giver. No one can thus receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ without the deepest gratitude. Thankfully we receive what Christ thus bestows. We 'say grace' before meals in acknowledgement of God's goodness. Not by our own efforts, in the end, but by His contriving and ordering of the world, are our wants satisfied, and so we give thanks for His supplying of our needs. Just as truly must we give thanks and praise for the coming of Jesus Christ. Grace calls forth gratitude and love, and with them the desire to serve One who has been so gracious toward us. By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we are enabled to take our place within the great company of His followers, who seek to live in obedience to Him and in love to all their fellow-men, for His sake. The grace given to Christians fills all their lives, makes them full of joy and hope and enables them to accomplish what, by themselves, they dare not even attempt. A recent writer has pictured St. Paul in the company of some Roman soldiers comparing the best day's march of a legion with his own travelling records. 'One day', he begins to say, 'I covered . . .' And there he checks himself, and adds: 'Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' St. Paul in many of his letters, so full of references to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shows his own life to de-

pend upon the same grace. His message is the message of grace; his prayers are offered to a gracious God: the past is the story of grace laying hold upon him; the future will show more and more of grace as it unfolds; the present is the hour of opportunity, for the grace he has received is making life great and glorious for him. 'By the grace of God', he says, 'I am what I am'—devoted to the Saviour who has done so much for him.

Our trust in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ may be unbounded, for there is no limit to His love. 'There was grace enough', it has been said, 'to make the saints and martyrs of olden times. There is grace enough to make us saints to-day'—for the last truth about grace is that it is inexhaustible. Wave upon wave it comes ever from Christ to the needy, the sinful, the undeserving—to all who will take this greatest gift. The words of the hymn are really true when we realize that the costliness of grace to the Giver and its unlimited outflowing towards us is measured by the Cross where Jesus died: 'There is grace enough for thousands of new worlds as great as this.' The Church preaches the gospel of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that this will suffice for all the world's need, and Christians testify that His grace remains ever with His people. It is the grace of One who will not leave us nor forsake us. All the way of life—whatever it may bring of joy or sorrow, of seeming failure or true success—grace will go before us and be with us to the end. It will not fail us in the hour of death, for the promise of life beyond the grave is made sure to us only through the grace that is in Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and exalted, and ever near to those who trust in Him.

The familiar phrase of the New Testament letters, used still in the blessing at the close of worship in our Churches, is no empty formula. For Christians then, and for us to-day, it is full of the new, wonderful meaning which Jesus gave to 'grace'. The greatness of a Saviour who comes

from above and gives Himself freely for sinners and the story of what His love has done for men; His offering to the undeserving of pardon and the possibility of a life never known before; the gratitude of those who trust Him and their responsive love—all this, and with it a sense of the limitless resources of His grace, was in the greeting of the early Christians, and may be in our minds and in our hearts also when we use the words which brought so much gladness to their lives—which should mean no less to us since He is the same Lord still in all the fullness of His grace.

J. G. RIDDELL

Where is Heaven?

I

WHEN you ask this question, I can picture you putting your head back and gazing into a summer sky of such luminous blue that you cannot see the skylark that floods the light with singing. You feel an airy, lifting sensation in your breast, as if your heart were a fluttering bird; you seem to mount up and up with the skylark into blue space, meeting the air with a cold shiver of joy. Up there it is indeed heavenly: God is there, and in His presence it is easy to be happy and brave and good.

Probably you have a vague notion that when a good man dies his soul, a white but invisible vapour shaped like his body, will go floating up through that intense blue for miles and miles, until at last he reaches another world on top of the sky. Across acres of sky-blue meadows he will see a white city standing four-square upon its cloudy foundations, surrounded by great walls pierced by gates of pearl. First he will have to satisfy St. Peter, an old man with a large key, who peers through the bars of the principal gate. The Recording Angel will make a report from his book, and if it is good enough the soul will get in, to find streets paved with gold, and in the middle of the city a wide open space full of angels praising God, who sits on a great white throne.

The Other Place, with the naughty but expressive name, where bad people go, is, of course, a weird nightmare of red demons and fire in the middle of the earth or in the sky below Australia.

These pictures may lurk at the back of your mind, although you feel that they are not quite right. How does the city float on the clouds, and how far does the sky extend outside, beyond and beyond—your brain reels to think of it. What would happen if an aeroplane came

roaring through the clouds into heaven, or a stratosphere balloon full of professors bobbed up into the celestial meadows? It would never do. Heaven is not a city above the clouds; that is just a picture in human words of the way people have felt when they thought of heaven.

Perhaps you have heard A. A. Milne's song, in which he says that Half-way up the Stairs 'isn't really anywhere, it's somewhere else instead'. Try to imagine a place that is not anywhere, but somewhere else; then think of a place that is everywhere, like light and air. Heaven may lie somewhere between these thoughts; heaven can be thought about, but you cannot see it with your eyes or touch it with your hands, any more than you can see or touch love.

II

Heaven is where God is; and where Jesus is, there is heaven. To know God as our loving Father is to be in heaven, just as to live with father and mother is to be at home. If our parents moved to Canada, we should feel that the home went with them. We know our parents by living with them, by speaking to them, and by loving them. If we let our minds and souls live with God in love and friendship, we shall know Him, and make our inward home with Him. His home is heaven, therefore our souls begin to dwell in heaven when they begin to know God. There are several ways of getting to know God; let us think about some of them, and we shall learn something about heaven.

Your thoughts and feelings were heavenly as you stood gazing up into the summer sky, listening to the skylark. Your soul was actually on the threshold of heaven. Supposing for the moment that we thought of heaven as a very large ladder, we might say that your feet were on the first rung of the ladder to God. This ladder is always at your feet, just as the sun is always in the sky, whether it is

shining on you or not. When you looked up into the summer sky, the wonderful feeling of breathless joy was caused by the atmosphere of heaven acting upon your soul. You may have the same thrill in looking upon the loveliness of God's creation all over the world. If you believe that God made this beautiful world and that He helps you to see its beauty, you will learn to value these moments of enchantment, and you will see in the thrill that they bring the signal of God's presence, just as something within you tells you that there is another person in a dark room. When you thrill to the presence of God in beauty, your soul is in heaven.

I remember that I had this sensation as a boy at certain times, sliding on the ice-bound pond in winter, standing on top of a hill, lying in the warm heather, or walking high above the bay, watching the gulls swooping down into the sea. The inward stir of wonder and joy had still more of God's presence when I was unselfish and shared my possessions, when I was brave enough to choose the right, and when I got through my work or did my duty even although it was difficult. A voice within seemed to say: 'Well done.' I had known what God wanted me to do, I had done it, and He was pleased. I could never have done this without God's help, so I knew that God was with me, and I felt the stirring of His life in my soul. It was so much beyond this life that it could only be eternal life; therefore I was in heaven. The thrill of beauty and the satisfaction of goodness tell us of the presence of God just as the lighting up of the dial in a radio set tells us that the current is switched on; but if we are deaf we cannot hear the music.

III

Many people know the thrill of beauty and obey the inner command to be good, without seeing God in either of these things, and they are not in heaven when they

have such experiences because they leave God out of them. This is something like looking on at a football match instead of playing; it is a poor substitute for the game. Beauty and goodness, it is true, do not of themselves assure us that God is near and heaven is all about us. We need the Bible to tell us about God; we need the words of Jesus; we need the testimony of the people of all ages who have known God. I am sure that you have sometimes felt great inward joy when you were listening to a story read from the Gospels, or singing a psalm like the Old Hundredth; and you must have met people who were so close to God that He shone out of every radiant look and action. At such times you may have known the presence of God, the same presence seen in different ways. So you could say: 'God is here, in the story of Jesus, in the Psalms, in this good man, in loving service. God must be in beauty also, and it must be His voice that I hear bidding me to do right. In all these things I see the same God, and I know that I am in heaven.' This is the second step on the heavenly ladder.

The third step is to speak to God directly, and to enjoy His friendship. Have you ever prayed to God about something which was very important for you? If you were in earnest, you may remember how a wave of joy, peace, and assurance came sweeping over you. It was like fresh sea breezes blowing into a stuffy room; you felt clean and strong. You could imagine that Jesus was standing near, smiling upon you as He used to smile upon the young folk in Galilee. So long as the feeling lasted, it was easy to be good: you wanted to speak the truth, to be unselfish, to play the game, to be honest and clean. This was the life of heaven in your soul changing your mind and will, and sometimes it worked out in active service to others, for Christ's sake. In all these things Jesus is our perfect example: He lived so close to God that His soul was in heaven, while His body remained on earth, so that

wherever He went He took the atmosphere of heaven into daily life.

IV

'Very well,' you say, 'but what about the heaven after death?' This is the heaven about which we speak most and know least. We speak about going to heaven after death because of the heaven we know in this life. Heaven is where God is; if we are Christians in the true sense of the word our souls are now connected with God, so they also are in heaven. Our experience of heaven is so wonderful that we wish it to increase; but all through life we feel like travellers landing upon a beautiful shore and looking inland at long stretches of alluring meadows and peaceful hills. This is God's country, and He wants us to explore it; He is our loving Father, and He wants our friendship. We believe that He will not stop our souls on the very shore of heaven, just because our bodies, which hold us to the shore, pass away. If we have accepted His eternal life, He will never take it from us; Jesus has assured us of this.

Supposing that we try to put these ideas in the form of another picture. Of course our picture cannot be exact, but it may help us to understand the truth. During earthly life each of us is like a little exploration ship with a very small crew sailing through perilous and uncharted Arctic seas, full of hidden rocks and terrible icebergs. The ship carries a large and powerful seaplane packed away in separate parts in her hold, to be assembled when she reaches the scene of operations and used for experiment and discovery. The crew is like the soul, and the seaplane is like the spiritual body which bears the soul to God. Sometimes the seaplane leaves the ship and makes specially thrilling flights of discovery, sometimes it just reports hidden dangers; but the more it is flown the more useful it is. At last the ship sinks, or she has to be

abandoned, but the crew, well prepared, board the seaplane and fly to the Base Camp and safety, with all their documents.

We carry with us into life the materials for the building-up of a spiritual body, the basis of character, and the opportunity for training our souls. By obedience to God our Maker and love to Christ our Redeemer we can assist in the building of our spiritual body, the making of character, and the training and use of our souls, just like the crew of the exploration ship. Safety at the end, and honour, will depend on how we have used the voyage. If the crew have worked obediently and well every day, becoming expert in the handling of the seaplane and of their instruments, they will find that the flight to safety is just an extension of their most thrilling flights of exploration. From the Base they will be enabled by the Master of all Explorers to set out on new and more glorious expeditions. That is what death and heaven mean to the Christian.

Those who only use the seaplane for joy-rides, or abuse it, can never hope to become explorers, and they have little chance of reaching the Base at last. Those who never unpack the plane can hardly hope to survive the wreck. Your choice now is clear.

JOHN B. LOGAN

Do we Really Know Anything at all about Life after Death?

I DO not pretend to be able to say anything new or startling. I can only try to state what I believe Christianity has to say on the subject, guided by the light of such new truth as the Holy Spirit has been revealing to this generation. For it is good that we should be reminded that knowledge can never be static, and it is exceedingly unfortunate that the text 'the faith once delivered to the saints' is often used as if it meant that the Holy Spirit had finished His work of revelation. He is to lead us into all the truth, and truth is not only many-sided, but often mysterious—in its ancient sense, something hidden but ready to be revealed. I am not going to deal in any way with the debatable question of being able to communicate with those who have passed over, because Christianity says little tangible about it, and though some well-known and greatly respected scientists believe in it and its value whole-heartedly, they know it has great dangers which will make ordinary folk leave it alone, unless they do it from a scientific standpoint. It is also to be noted that some people who treat it as a religion definitely attack not only the Churches, but the great truths of Christianity itself.

I want to say at the outset that the Christian idea of the Resurrection is much more than mere survival; the Greeks and Latins practised clairvoyance and had ideas of a future life. But the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a new factor in history, a definite revelation of God's Power which brought hope and joy to mankind; and it was the preaching of this which changed the world.

Now, though we know little on the whole about the future life, Christianity has a real message about it, and

we can find great comfort from that message, as well as real warning. First of all, a man may ask what evidence we have for survival. The answer, surely, is that if you believe in Christianity at all you must believe in a future life, or the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ have no meaning. God is love. He calls us His children, and loves us while here, and it is inconceivable that death should bring all his loved ones to an end. Moreover, Jesus said to His disciples, 'I go to prepare a place for you', and more striking still, to the thief on the cross, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' 'Thou . . . with me'—two personalities together in the future life; our Lord knew where He was going and that He would not be alone. That 'to-day', too, helps us to realize that we start that new life straight away and do not sleep for ages waiting for a resurrection, as people used to think, and some hymns seem to suggest. It has been truly said that 'death is but a bend in the road of life'. Death is the gateway to a new life, not to age-long sleep, and though our bodies may be laid in a grave, we ourselves—our personalities—enter a new kind of life. One of the reasons why I hope when I die that my body will be cremated is because sometimes relatives and friends, and especially children, who are too often allowed to go to the graveside, are apt to think that those who are buried are actually in the grave; they go like Mary and Martha to weep at the grave, but do not see Jesus standing outside and saying, 'He that believeth on Me shall never die.' My body may be ashes—our bodies will all come to dust—but I, we, our personalities will enter into a new life.

But again, a man may ask: 'But what shall we be like? Shall we just be disembodied souls, whatever that may be?' And it seems to me that the answer is given by St. Paul when he says, 'There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.' The natural body we know, the spiritual we cannot describe. Our Lord, according to St.

Mark, the earliest Gospel, says 'they are as angels in Heaven' when refuting the Sadducees' question about the Resurrection, expressing a truth in picture language which they could understand. After the Resurrection our Lord Himself appears with a spiritual body, which makes one believe that the body has a form similar to our present body, by which recognition is possible. Of course, it is a mystery which will one day be revealed, but some instinct within us surely tells us that there will be recognition in the fuller life so that we may know those we have loved here and renew our fellowship there. Do we not also picture the future life as a home, a fellowship, a communion? A state, that is, where love reigns and we shall have objects to love just as we have communion now with those who have passed over.

Is it not because love is eternal, and fellowship through God, who is Love, so real, that the veil between this world and the next is so very thin?

May I give you a personal experience? Last year, when my sister was just about to follow her twin sister to the future life, and be united again with her who had passed on only the year before, I felt an almost overwhelming desire to ask her to give my love to her twin, and it certainly did not seem in any way incongruous; perhaps she was there with us in the room—I don't know; but I am sure the veil is very thin at times between this world and the next. But this I do know, her true personality is as real to me to-day as it was when she was here.

Again, the question will be asked: does Christianity suggest what we shall do in the future life? I imagine we all have ideas about this, and I hope we have got over making material what has been given us in picture, symbol, or poetry, such as playing on golden harps, or singing in the celestial choir, or sitting by streams in the Elysian fields for ever and ever; for these pictures are enough to make the future life appear a thoroughly

boring existence. Here a parable may help us; our Lord certainly seems to suggest in the Parable of the Talents that the reward for service here will be further service in the life beyond. Our Lord, we are told in St. Peter's Epistle, went to preach to the spirits in prison, and as Love is service we can only imagine that we shall have the fulfilment of Love by opportunities of service in the life beyond. Rest as portrayed in the future life, it seems to me, can only be taken in the sense of that line in one of our hymns, 'In perfect work shall be perfect rest'.

Again, Christianity implies that there must be growth in our characters in the life beyond. Although our aim here is perfection, no one is perfect when death's call comes, and I cannot see that the process of death is going to make any difference to our personalities; we shall pass over just as we are. 'To be with Christ, which is far better', St. Paul says, that is our hope and will be our joy, so that we may be transformed into His image from glory to glory. But as we are not perfect when we pass over, and perfection is God's purpose for us, it is clear that there must be growth; and that as we are given a perfect perception of what God's love and purpose is we shall grow into the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Again, some one will ask, What about the question of punishments and rewards of which we read so much in the New Testament, and, indeed, in our Lord's words? There can be little doubt that Christianity teaches that this life is a preparation for the next; and however much we may revolt—and rightly, I think—against the material pictures describing hell, there can be little doubt that Christianity speaks of a future judgement for all and especially those who have deliberately refused to live according to the light that has been given them. We are told that our Lord Himself, who knows what is in man, his difficulties and his trials, will be the Judge who is merciful and of great kindness. And I doubt if all the

pictures of a material hell-fire would be as bad as looking into those eyes of Love when we have deliberately rejected Him and the highest that is in us, and we realize that He knows the flimsiness of our excuses. It is true that some of us make our own hell here and we may be passing through its purifying fire now, but it is not all the truth. If there were no future life in which men would come face to face, perhaps for the first time, with the knowledge of the despicable cruelty, inhumanity, and utter fiendishness of their treatment of God's children, Love itself would not be true to its nature, there would be no possibility either of reformation or redemption, and some would say, retribution.

Once more, Christianity teaches that in the future life we shall be able to comprehend the Beauty, the Wonder, and the Love of God Himself; now we know only in part, but then shall we know even as we are known. At present our vision is often so feeble, the mystery of God's love is only partially revealed, but to be with Christ, to see God dealing with His children as Christ did, to find the explanation of all those things we find so difficult to understand now, and to know Him who is all Love and Beauty, Goodness and Truth, that is surely worth striving for and making our aim now?

May I then sum up what I have been trying to say? I have dealt, I know, only with part of the subject and only from the Christian standpoint, which needs, and can only be apprehended by, what is called faith, that step which we all must take beyond what is called reason if we are to achieve the Christian life, the step which God calls us to take as little children of a Heavenly Father. This is what it seems to me to say, that through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, Death is not the end of us, though it is of our natural body; that it is the entrance for us, our personality, to a new and fuller life with a spiritual body through which recognition will

be possible of those we love in the Family of God; that we enter that life with the same character and personality with which we leave this; that we shall not remain static, but be given a chance to grow towards perfection; that as we have tried to be faithful here to what is highest, God will give us further service in the life to come, and there in the blessed fellowship of God's children the Father will reveal Himself to us, and we shall know what Love really means.

For this is life eternal, that we may know God and see Him face to face, without sin and without shame, through His everlasting Love and Mercy.

And is there not a message in all this for you and me? May I suggest two things.

First, the thought of the future life should keep us young in mind; this life is so small a proportion of life as a whole, it will make us continually eager to learn to be ready for fresh wonder, as we approach the gateway to this new life.

Secondly, it should brace us to new effort. We do not want to go to that life shrivelled and useless personalities who have learned nothing but self-gratification, but strong, virile, living souls who have done our bit to work out the eternal purpose of God through serving our generation with His help. God knows we have made mistakes, and often failed miserably, but if this has been our motive and we have shown the Christ-like spirit in our relation to others in reliance on Him day by day, He will see amongst all the dross something of the image of Himself, and it will enable Him at the last to make us grow into His likeness, into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

PAT MC CORMICK

Who are the Angels?

WHAT are angels? Why do we and other people have beliefs about them? I will not start from the Bible, but from common sense. It is reasonable to begin by believing what capable people tell us, but we only go on thinking of what they tell us if it explains, helps to make sense of, what we can see in our own experience, as when geologists explain how the rocks came to lie on one another. So, we believe God made the world and our lives, because that explains why it is such a wonderful world, and our lives in it are full of meaning.

To unbelief there are two opposite roads, and, curiously enough, we use both.

Science. The first is the pride or confidence of knowledge. We, or our scientists, have learnt such an amazing amount that many people cannot believe anything exists which cannot be seen or measured in scientific fashion.

Agnosticism. The second is the sense of littleness and ignorance. Do we know much? How much do we see of the dust beneath our feet, or of the depth of the waters, except, perhaps, a tiny bit in a microscope? What are we to say of the untold ages before there were men to see anything, or of what is really happening in the vast spaces of the stars? To our insignificance, can there be any meaning for this vast emptiness of space and time?

Is it right, is it any use, to ask questions which are no business of ours? I answer: all the great discoveries have been made by asking questions in just this way, out of sheer wonder. The use of discoveries was quite secondary, and the meaning of things, the meaning of our lives, is very much our business. The universe is like a motor-car. Our scientists have learnt ever so much of how it works, but they cannot tell where it is going, or why some one wants to go in it. It is no use asking the

machine, for machines, like universes, do not answer questions.

Then if we ask of God why He made the universe as He has made it, the first answer is that He enjoyed making it this way—not in a finished perfection, but by what we call Evolution. And He made us men that we might share His joy, first by learning the wonder of the world, secondly by trying to work out some of God's purposes for ourselves.

That explains a lot of things, but why do we know so little? It is not that I want to know it all myself. You and I can rather enjoy watching the cleverness of scientists and artists, who know and can do more than we can. If God likes to share His knowledge, why does He share so very little? Is there no one to enjoy those possibilities of time and space at which we can hardly guess?

Now, our scientists know a great deal about the physical conditions of our bodily life, and just a little in regard to the mind-life. So far there is no known place, quite probably there is no place, where men like ourselves, or perhaps any life such as we know, could exist, except on this earth, where they have come to exist.

On the other hand, why should we suppose that we, rather messy humans—for we do make rather a mess of God's purposes—are the only intelligent beings possible in God's universe? There is no known reason why life should go only with these particular chemical conditions rather than any other; nor why a mind should want a chemical body. Indeed, modern theories about the relation of ether-waves, first to the existence of matter, secondly to sensation, might make anything possible.

Scientifically, we are here outside the range of what can be seen and measured; nevertheless, people in general—heathen and Christian—always have believed that we men were not utterly alone in an empty universe. I am not thinking only of the stars, but of the empty

spaces in one's own life, which have driven so many people to what we call 'spiritualism'.

I have no doubt at all that vastly the greater part of spiritualism is—like the gambling trade—a deception of impatient folly, but there is a darker side. All I have known personally who took up with it went mad. I believe that is a not uncommon result. They began playing with spirits, and, in biblical language, the evil spirits 'took possession' of them. People who have lived in genuinely heathen countries have seen many strange happenings, which are relatively rare in countries like our own.

Human sin is often a mixture of weakness, ignorance, and folly, but there is a good deal of objectless wickedness in individuals, and at times whole movements seem defiantly unreasonable. We say the world has gone mad. It mostly does in war time. But then—you and I—losing our tempers, nursing grievances, having sulks, are also rather insane. Can you explain any of these things except by saying that we have let the devil have his way with us.

If there are spirits malevolent and mischievous, certainly there are spirits good and helpful. We believe that God watches over us all; yet we know that very often He helps us by setting other people to watch over us—doctors and teachers, priests and our friends. But men are rather funny. All nice people enjoy helping, though it is a bit self-important. On the other hand, a great many of us dislike being helped. I have heard people insist on the dependence of the soul on God alone, 'without any intermediary'. (I believe this referred to priests, and perhaps friends; for I suppose they use doctors, and listen to the B.B.C.) But isolation is the note of pride and sin. Is God isolated? Sometimes, as on the Cross; but not normally. He has made men for fellowship.

This question of isolation is fundamental, both in regard to our life, and to what we think about God.

Men, by virtue of weakness, can hardly live at all without help. The greater a man is the more he has to live by begging—though he does not call it so. The Prime Minister is dependent not only on his servants and on his tailor, but on secretaries and assistant officials. Really great men know it well and beg nicely, but ambitious people, and multitudes of quite little people, try to forget these indispensable helpers; they like to feel and look as if they could do everything themselves.

With God it is different both ways. Certainly He does not need help, but then He loves to have others round Him.

Now we might see what the Bible has to tell us. I did not begin from the Bible. When people start by quoting what somebody says—even what prophets and apostles have said when they are speaking as God's 'intermediaries'—it just may set us thinking, but it is apt to come as mere words. God educated mankind for a long time. I do not say God *left* men, He helped them, to think for themselves a long time before He gave them a direct teaching. It is only when you have tried, and as you have learnt, to think for yourself that you will really know what people are talking about.

The Bible writers seem to have a clear idea that God created 'angels'—spiritual beings—before He created anything else. When he did create stars and things, the angels were not allowed to help in that; for only God can create anything, but they were allowed to watch it, and they enjoyed it mightily—'shouted for joy'.¹ And, once things were started, I have no doubt they found plenty to do, and enjoyed doing it, though, as you would expect, we are told most about what they did for men; for this word, 'angels', means messengers.

Obviously, it would be as useless to ask what angels are 'like', when there is nothing like them in our physical

¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

experience, as for a blind man to ask what sight is like. The pictures of angels with wings are only helps to our fancy. Where angels have appeared, one gathers that they looked much like men, but those were appearances only. Normally, you cannot 'see' angels at all, and I think it is true that we are less conscious of their help than we are of the hindrance of evil spirits. But that you ought to expect. The most really helpful people are very quiet about what they are doing. It is only our vanity that makes us fussy.

In the Old Testament, the angels are constantly spoken of as the army ('host') of heaven, and we hear a little of the different orders or ranks among them. We are told of Seraphim and Cherubim, who may be the highest. St. Paul apparently speaks of four other orders,¹ and we hear of archangels as well as angels who seem to take charge of little things—like you and me—piloting us in a brotherly sort of way. We cannot be sure what all these names mean, but where God has made things on earth in such variety of kinds, I do not suppose that the armies of heaven are all exactly alike.

If we say that the angels carry out God's purposes, do they also sometimes make a mess of them—as we do? You may read in Job iv. 18 that: 'God chargeth his angels with folly.' The world is, mostly, very beautiful, and incredibly wonderful, but bits of it are ugly, and some bits even seem a little clumsy. Apparently God did not want a world of smooth perfection—do you? I do not think I do. If God loves you and me, then God loves imperfect things, as all good people—specially including mothers—have a tenderness for children. All the same, clumsiness is clumsy, and I can hardly imagine that God could make a thing that way Himself.

On the other hand, if we call the angels 'pure spirit', one may be pretty sure they are less messy, because less

¹ Col. i. 16.

muddled, than you and me. But that works both ways. I am going to tell you a story—maybe a fable or parable. It is not told just this way in the Bible, though it agrees with a good many hints one may find there. I will note the passages for you. I do not suppose it is exactly true, but I think it is a picture not very far off the truth.

Once on a time God created the heavens (perhaps that means 'ether'), and the spiritual beings that dwell therein. Then He made the material universe, including this earth. Last of all, He made men to dwell on the earth—with spiritual souls, capable of love, and with minds which could learn to understand, working through earthly bodies, so that men take a long time to learn, and are too separated in self-will to love easily. In both ways they were inferior to angels.

But then God had purposed from the very beginning¹ that some day He would take, not the nature of angels, but the human nature to Himself, just because in man the spiritual and material were combined.² So that when Christ, having been made man, having suffered and died as man, yet triumphed over death and ascended in the body to the throne of God, not the spiritual only, but the material creation also would have a place in the promise and hope of redemption.³

Now our life is first of all an education: Can you learn to believe in God? Secondly, it is a test: Do you love God? I do not know how angels can be educated, but I am sure they are tested. The story goes that when the angels heard that these new-made men would be set above them, a good many—including one of the very highest, whom Isaiah calls Lucifer—were very indignant, and set out to do men all the harm they could.

Now I think you will understand what I mean when I say that angels are less muddled than we are. We do evil out of stupidity, not often whole-heartedly, but the angels

¹ See Eph. i.

² Heb. i, ii.

³ Rom. viii. 21.

are not stupid. When they revolted against God, they were quite whole-hearted, and they succeeded so far that 'Satan' could boast to Christ that all the kingdoms of the world were his.

One thing made it more difficult, that these evil angels still had their place in heaven, so that they could make confusion even in men's religion. St. Paul believed that the heathen gods to whom men prayed were not God, but spirits, and few people realize how much men look to—in fact, worship—the powers of evil to bring them success.

Most of the angels, however, loved God far too well to be jealous about their own status. They tried to help, as much as they were allowed; for in helping there are many difficulties. In smashing things, you can hardly go wrong and everything counts. But in building up you must be quite sure that you build right, or it will not count at all; it may even count a minus way. You must be careful not to get in the way of people who can do better than you can.

At last, as you may read in Rev. xii. 7, the trouble in heaven came to open war as between two parties, and the devil was thrown out of heaven. It is not quite clear when this happened. It began with the birth of the Child—that is, from Bethlehem. You may remember how pleased the angels were over it,¹ but I gather that the actual 'casting out' did not follow immediately on the Incarnation. Indeed, when at last Christ was made man, that made the strife more furious. Violence and falsehood and deception—we can never get these wholly out of earthly things, such as politics and business, but it belongs to the preaching of the Gospel, that is, to the Church, to cast these ideas of cruelty and fear out of our religion as they have already been cast out of 'heaven'.

This may seem to you a very fanciful picture. A good many people seem to imagine that our religious life is a

¹ Luke ii. 13.

very simple business of religious and moral goodness, and talking of devils is rather unreal. To my mind, *that* is fanciful. If you study the Psalms, they give you a view of human life, or history, and what they show is a continual struggle against very real evil powers, sometimes called the proud or the mighty, sometimes seen in the power of men who are taking the side of evil against God. This strife very much concerns the individual soul—the 'I'—but it is not merely individual. It is just because we are so contented with ourselves, and think so little of the whole cause of God and righteousness, that talking of evil powers seems unreal. In a way it is unreal; for when you are content with yourself the devils will not trouble you much. Why should they?

How real the strife with evil can be, the whole story of the Crucifixion shows. The devil is an awful fool, blinded by hate and spite, like all who trust him, and driven to violence and falsehood. He can only see obvious things. The death of Christ was his crowning victory, and it was utter defeat. Christ *has* risen, triumphed over everything, and ascended. The devil *has* been cast out of heaven, though he goes on being very troublesome on earth because 'he hath but a short time'. All mere time is short, even if it seems long to us. God *has* taken His power to Himself, and has become King.¹

After all, I have said nothing really about the mystery of the spaces. I do not feel that I have anything very real to say. It may be that there are plenty of 'men', having bodies of living matter, though of a different kind from ours. If they have material bodies at all, it would seem that they must have the same trouble over self-will that we have. They also will need redemption. Somehow or other they will have to share in ours; for God does not do this sort of thing often. Perhaps the redeemed souls are sent to those other worlds to preach the gospel.

¹ Rev. xi. 17.

Sometimes I think it may be so. At other times I wonder if the spaces are not just a huge play-ground for angels, where we also shall be allowed to play with them—some day. I am only sure that God knows quite well what He is doing with His spaces, even if He has not told you and me.

HERBERT KELLY

What is the Soul?

TO start with, soul means just life. The familiar initials 'S O S' stand for 'Save our souls', and this means 'Save our lives'.

The Animal Soul. Now, there are many kinds of life. Plants, for instance, have life, though it sounds fanciful to talk of them as having souls. So far as we know they do not feel or think, but they act: they absorb food, they grow and multiply, they decay and die. Animals have a larger life. At the lowest levels it is hard to distinguish between plant and animal; but there is no doubt about the difference when we mount higher on the scale. Even the most splendid oak shows no sign of feeling or perceiving. It is different with animals. It is indeed hard to say what their life is like, for they have no words with which to tell us. But at least we may be certain that they feel pleasure and pain, perceive the things about them, have many impulses similar to our own, and that the higher animals show the rudiments of thinking. With these marks of life it does not seem fanciful to speak of the animal soul.

The Human Soul. In these respects the soul of man is like the animal soul, but it differs from it in many ways.

In the first place, the human soul has an idea of itself. Man knows himself as continuing the same being throughout the changes in his body and the growth of his mind and character. It is memory that makes this knowledge possible, and the memory required is not merely the recurrence of some experience that has occurred before. Sensations, perceptions of things, feelings, impulses, acts, occur; and others similar to them afterwards recur. But I have memory only when the new experience is recognized as having occurred before in my own life. One continuing life or soul is needed in

order that there may be memory, just as, on the other hand, memory is needed to make us aware of our continuing life. What sort of memory is shared by animals we cannot tell. But it must be narrow in range, and is probably different in kind from man's.

In the second place, the soul has not only an idea of itself and its body. It forms ideas of the things surrounding it in space and time, discovers their relations, and forms science; it has ideas of other selves (or body-souls) like itself and of their grouping in family, nation, and race, and begins to understand history; it discovers rules or principles which may serve to guide it in choosing between good and evil in action; and it learns to produce things which will satisfy it not only by their usefulness but by their beauty. Science and history and philosophy are among the greatest achievements of the human soul, or of what (because intellect is so prominent in them) we should rather call the human mind.

At the least, therefore, we must say that the soul of man is of a higher order than the animal soul.

Body and Soul. Man is body-soul or body-mind. We may call him animate body or embodied soul. In what way body and soul are united in one being is a question of great difficulty. There are many theories about it, but no general agreement among those who have most closely studied the subject; and it cannot be discussed here. Nor will I discuss the evidence produced by the Society for Psychical Research, partly because it is not generally accepted by men of science, partly because it is not confirmed in my own experience. Leaving this out of account and restricting ourselves to normal experience, some statements may be made with confidence:

1. Certain changes in the body lead to changes in the soul or to its disappearance altogether; certain changes in the soul lead to changes in the body, but never to its complete disappearance. This is a fundamental point of

difference, and due weight must be given to it. It shows that our lives are dependent upon their material embodiment in a way in which the material embodiment is not dependent upon our lives: but it does not show that soul is a mere 'function' of matter organized in a certain way. We knew before that life and, still more, mind are late and rare visitors to the material realm, and their origin is unknown. But they do not enter matter from the outside: they animate it and leave it. As no man now alive has ever been dead, there is no one to tell us what death means to the soul.

2. As we pass to higher levels of mind it becomes increasingly difficult to connect a particular mental event with a particular bodily event. If we ask: What event in the brain corresponds to my conviction that I, who am now thinking, am the same self as thought on the same subject yesterday? no physiologist can answer. The same may be said about the reasoning of the mathematician or the metaphysician, and, indeed, of many simpler matters.

3. If we are tracing the organization of matter and what happens at each stage, we are inclined to look upon mental activity as a function of brain. But if we are thinking of our own life and its purposes, then we look upon brain as the instrument of mind. Both views may be justified, if one is not taken to exclude the other.

4. In any case, soul and its activities are entirely unlike matter and its movements. For instance, there is no resemblance at all between the pain of toothache and decay in a tooth with its resultant neural disturbance. Closely as they are connected, soul and body belong to different orders of existence.

Soul and the World. The poet Keats called the world a 'vale of soul making', and the phrase has gained currency in recent years. It is in the world that a man discovers and makes his own soul. For his soul does not remain unchanged, but is formed by the life he leads. Sometimes

it may be allowed to revert almost to the animal level, and then it is easiest to regard it as just a function of the body. Or it may aim at higher things, for attaining which the body is, at best, merely an instrument. A writer with a deep knowledge of human nature gave a list of such things in this piece of advice: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.' Many men do think on these things and strive to reach them; and, in so doing, they are beginning to raise their souls not indeed out of the world, but above the world.

Thus the soul of man is not the world's creature only; it is also the world's interpreter and in some ways its master. It comes to understand the laws of nature, seeks to unravel their meaning by the help of ideals which nature itself did not supply, and makes an effort to bring the world into greater harmony with these ideals. The spirit of man (for here the team spirit may be preferred to soul) need not disdain its humble beginnings, for it is able to link itself with things that are eternal.

W. R. SORLEY

Is there a Hell?

WHEN Dr. Johnson, towards the end of his life, was visiting his old friend, Dr. Adams, the Master of Pembroke College, he expressed a fear that he might be 'one of those who shall be damned'; and when the amiable and philosophical master said, 'What do you mean by damned?' Dr. Johnson 'passionately and loudly' gave vent to the terror which always haunted him, by replying 'Sent to hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly!'

This was the plain orthodox view in the eighteenth century, as it had been in the Middle Ages and in the Dark Ages before them. To be damned was to be sent to hell and to be in hell was to exist in unspeakable torments which would never come to an end. It is true that the words for 'hell' and 'damnation' do not really mean this in the original Greek; but this was the meaning that had long ago been fastened upon them, and the meaning they bear in plain English to-day. To use the word 'hell' for the condition which a man makes for himself, for the blindness, bitterness, and shame from which he can escape by repentance is to play with words and to employ 'hell' in a sense which in all its vicissitudes it has never borne. Hell, in the language of theology and of common speech alike, is not a condition that man makes for himself, but a place which God has prepared for him; neither is it a condition from which he can escape by repentance, but one from which there is no escape, since he is sent there for ever. People who believe in hell may reduce the number of its victims, they may lower by a few hundred degrees the temperature of its flame—or even, greatly venturing, may aver that the fire is 'spiritual' (as if that made it of no account); but they cannot make hell other than a place—or at best, a condition—of everlasting punishment.

Nor can they, unless they are Anglicans or Protestants of the modern type, empty their hell of those who are unbaptized, including all the virtuous heathen who have ever lived, though they may hope for some mitigation in the best cases. In fact, if they believe in hell, they must, with whatever modifications and modernizations, believe in the essentials of the doctrine. This doctrine is that God, by His inscrutable decree, has created countless millions whom He knew to be destined to endless agony; that He has also placed most men in such environments that this fate has been inevitable and will continue so to be, indefinitely; and that He has carefully devised means for the torment of all these unfortunates, whose lives He will prolong for ever in order that they may be for ever miserable. In these words I am summarizing the accepted definitions; and I would beg all whose consciences are revolted by such a conception not to say that they believe in hell.

It is a common mistake to suppose that the doctrine of purgatory mitigates that of hell. The truth is that it vastly increases the horror of future punishment; for it does not hold out any help to those who are to be damned (whether for their sins, or because they are heathen, heretic, excommunicate, or unbaptized) but only adds torment to the future state of the just. . . . Thus a hideous uncertainty is thrown over the future: no one who believes in the doctrine knows what his fate will be or where those he loves are, or for how long. The only course is to hope they are in the terminable agony of purgatory and to win as many indulgences and secure as many masses as possible, without ever knowing for how much they have sufficed.

Few educated people, however, at the present day trouble their heads about everlasting damnation or the fires of hell. . . . We understand now that cruelty is the vilest form of human selfishness; but until recent times

a man could be cruel without offending against any of the accepted canons of morality. Cruelty is not among the Seven Deadly Sins of the medieval standard, and it is not specified in the Ten Commandments. . . . One result of this remarkable change is that it is no longer necessary to argue with intelligent people about the wrongfulness of the idea of endless torment; it has disappeared with the cruelty which engendered it.

The conception of sin as a stain that can be burnt out is itself a mistake, based on a misleading metaphor. Sin is not something to be washed or burnt away, but a disease of the will which can only be cured by a restoration to health. People in modern times have naturally dwelt upon the thought of an 'intermediate state' as an escape from the ethically atrocious idea of a hell; but that phrase is also misleading. It is rather of a progressive development that we have nowadays to think, of the many stages or stations in the Father's home, which are mentioned in the Great Discourse of the Fourth Gospel.¹ It is not an intermediate state between death and a supposed day of judgement that we now surmise, but rather we think quite simply of the next life; and in that life progress must be effected by the growth of what is good in a man, so that the evil—not without pain, it may be, the pain of regret, shame, and repentance, mingled with the creative joy of discovery and release—may drop away.

To believe even in a crude form of future punishment is not necessarily to believe in hell. We may indeed temerarily estimate that most men when they die are unfit to go 'straight to heaven' without therefore believing in either hell or purgatory. Nor does the conviction that there will be an adjustment in another world of this life's inequalities involve a belief in hell. All the deterrents of the universe cannot disinfect that word. The whole conception is wicked, shocking, and monstrous, and

¹ John xiv. 2.

not a splinter of its nauseous wreckage can be retained. To endeavour to spiritualize it, in the desire to justify the brutalized conceptions of a discredited dogmatic, is to put ourselves again on the side of Moloch; for, less coarse than the older Tophet, a spiritualized hell would be mere devilishly cruel. Hell and purgatory were both bad guesses at the mystery, before which our Lord was content with a great reserve. They cannot be made morally or psychologically possible by any process of refinement; for clarify them as we will, they remain essentially as crude as when men thought that Etna and Vesuvius were vents for the infernal torture chambers of departed souls.

PERCY DEARMER

*Is it Possible to Reconcile the Thought of
Eternal Punishment with an All-
Loving God?*

THE first point is that all those descriptions of hell and its physical tortures, which have been dwelt upon in many sermons and by many writers, are not Scriptural at all. We have inherited them from Milton and Dante and other writers, and from painters. All this account of the tortures of the damned, the physical tortures of the damned, you will not find in Holy Scripture at all.

That is the first point. Then you go on a little farther, and you say: 'Well, what does Holy Scripture teach us?' It teaches us three things. It teaches the doctrine of eternal punishment. Eternal punishment is spoken of again and again in Holy Scripture, and, if you come to think of it, so long as the sin is eternal, the punishment must be eternal too. In one place we pray to be delivered from eternal sin. A great writer says, 'When self-will ceases hell ceases.' All through, Scripture distinctly lays down that there is such a thing as eternal punishment; it does not say how many will inherit it. But the awful thing about which our Lord warns us was that the will might be so bent the wrong way that it would not be able to turn at all.

The second point is that Holy Scripture nowhere reveals what that punishment is.

Thirdly, everywhere Holy Scripture reveals that, whatever it is, it will be consistent with the Love of God.

Then come three other points which I think will help us very much. We notice that hell is compared in the New Testament to Gehenna. Now what was Gehenna? Gehenna was the fire outside Jerusalem which burnt up the offal and refuse of the city, which were cast upon it.

There were three things about Gehenna; it was placed outside the holy city; it was placed where the offal and refuse were burnt; it was not outside the government of the Roman Empire. In these three points hell is like Gehenna. It is outside the holy city; secondly, it is a place where the morally infectious are kept from harming others; but, thirdly, it is not outside the government of the just and loving God. In other words, God is the God of hell as well as the God of heaven. And that makes all the difference. We have been erecting in our minds two gods, one called the devil, and the other called God. This is impossible! God is love behind hell as well as behind heaven, and therefore we must get out of what is really the old Manichaean heresy of imagining there are two gods, one the devil and the other God. God, who shows such wonderful power, is the God of hell as well as the God of heaven; and just as Gehenna was not outside the government of the Roman Empire, though outside the holy city, so hell is not outside the government of God. Therefore the thing to hold on to is this, that God is not justice to some and love to others, but that God is justice and love to everybody; hell is not like Norfolk Island in the old days, where criminals were turned loose to look after themselves. Those who are in hell, whatever hell is, are still under the government and under the care of God. As Bishop Bickersteth says so beautifully in one of his books: 'There is room for the display towards even the crushed and humble ones of that everlasting mercy which is the emerald rainbow around the throne of God.'

A. F. LONDON

Is there a Personal Devil?

THE belief in a personal devil, who is the ruler over a host of evil spirits, and is continually trying to lead men away from God, was adopted by the Jews, after the exile, from the religion of Persia. The Persians believed that the world was the scene of a continual warfare between two gods, one good and one evil. This belief is an attempt to explain the facts of our daily life, in which it is obvious that there is a perpetual struggle between good and evil. It seemed natural to suppose that the tendencies which make for evil came from a supernatural power, just as it was believed that the tendencies towards good did. The Jews adopted the Persian figure of Ahri-man, the god of evil, and gave him the name of Satan, the 'adversary' or enemy of man. The Jews never thought of him as a divine being; he was held to have been created by God as one of the highest angels, who had rebelled against God before the creation of the world and had been cast out of heaven. He and the angels cast out with him formed an army of evil beings continually striving against God.

This belief does not really do what it is meant to do. We do not explain how evil came into the world by saying that it is the work of an angelic being who was created by God and rebelled against Him. If we cannot see why God should have created man in such a way that he was capable of sin, we do not explain it by saying that He first created an angelic being who was capable of sin. We put the difficulty one stage back, but we are no nearer solving it. It is not the concern of this paper to deal with the origin of evil. It is only necessary to point out that belief in a personal devil does not help us. Probably no one who believes in a personal devil now would think that it does so; but the belief began with the attempt to explain the origin of evil.

Our Lord in His incarnate life accepted the general beliefs of the Jewish religion of His time. In some points He corrected it where it was wrong. But at other points He seems to have accepted it as it stood without necessarily committing Himself to its absolute truth. In regard to the existence of the devil, He refers to him several times; moreover, the account of the temptation in the wilderness must come from our Lord Himself. He must have related it to His disciples. It is of course natural to suppose that the account, as it stands, proves that the devil appeared to our Lord to tempt him. If so, the question is decided, and we believe in a personal devil. On the other hand it is possible to suppose that our Lord, in being made man and a man of His own age and nation, accepted the beliefs of that age and nation, except in so far as it was not necessary for our salvation that He should do so. Hence it is possible to suppose that He accepted the belief in a personal devil, and therefore that His temptation took the form of the devil appearing to Him. A vision of any kind often takes an external form which is coloured to a large extent by what we already believe. Or it is possible that our Lord in telling of His experience put it in a form which would seem natural to his disciples. They believed in a personal devil and He did not think it necessary to correct their belief. The same consideration applies to His attitude towards those who were regarded in His day as being possessed by evil spirits. Apparently He accepts the belief; it is clear that by accepting it He was able to heal those who were regarded as possessed. We can say that His attitude on the matter is decisive; or we may hold that He accepts the belief of the sufferers and their friends without committing Himself to it; or we may say that here, too, He accepts the general outlook of His time as part of that limitation which the Incarnation involved.

On the other hand, a great deal of our daily experience

does suggest to us that the evil in the world comes from outside us. Often horrible suggestions of evil enter into our minds. We may never have thought of such things before, and we may hate having such thoughts, but they come all the same, and are very hard to drive out. They often seem to come from outside, just in the same way as suggestions put into our mind by other people. We believe that good impulses often come from God; why should not evil impulses come from a lord of evil?

But modern psychology has explained a great deal about the unconscious part of our minds, and shows that very often such ideas may rise from things we have heard or seen in the past, and then forgotten. So one of the reasons for believing in a personal devil is not so strong as it was formerly supposed to be. We may see or hear things and hardly notice them at the time; we forget them entirely, but yet they are stored away and may seem to come as quite new suggestions from outside us. We cannot say that such thoughts need a personal devil to explain them.

On the other hand, many of the greatest evils in the world do not arise from the sins of particular individuals. For instance, in 1914 hardly anybody really wanted a war. Most people wanted peace. But somehow the desires and ambitions of the different nations, many of which were in themselves quite good, caused the world to drift into a situation where war could not be avoided, and some people will see in such cases the influence of a living power of evil using the stupidity of men for his own purposes. It cannot be said that this argument can be proved; and again we have to explain why God allows Satan to go on rebelling against Him, or why He does not destroy him instead of allowing him to lead mankind astray.

Other people again will point to curious experiences in which forces of evil seem to manifest themselves in the

physical world, or to cases in which, in modern times, human beings seem to be possessed by evil spirits forcing them to commit crimes and sins which they hate. But here again our experience is coloured to an almost incredible extent by what we already believe. An English official in Africa has described how the medicine-men of a certain tribe announced that a sacred tree in which a powerful spirit lived had fallen down. The whole tribe were assembled for a ceremony by which the medicine-men hoped to persuade the spirit to raise the tree again and so prove that he had forgiven the tribe. The Englishman went to the ceremony and saw that the tree was standing up, as it always had. But it was quite clear that all the natives *saw* it lying down, until the proper moment of the ceremony, when they *saw* it raised up again. The Englishman was the only person who had all the time seen it standing up. The natives had all seen it lying down and then rising up again. If such things as this are possible, it becomes very hard to say that the existence of a personal devil is the only possible explanation of the peculiar happenings which seem to some people to prove his existence. It is hard to set any limit to the extent to which we may find strange phenomena which appear to prove the existence of the devil, if we start out with a firm belief that he exists and manifests himself in the production of miracles of evil.

Yet it must be borne in mind that we do not prove that the devil does not exist by finding a psychological explanation of the phenomena which are sometimes ascribed to his agency. Just as we can see that the grace of God works through the ordinary processes of our minds, so it is possible that evil, for which we can find a psychological explanation, none the less ultimately proceeds from the devil.

Further, there is no absolute reason for refusing to believe in such a lord of evil. If God has created man,

there is no reason why He should not have created other spiritual beings of a different kind. We cannot prove that God did not create angels, and though the conception of angels is not easy to reconcile with the general outlook on life of the modern scientist, it is perfectly possible that this is due to the inevitable limitations of that outlook; he is necessarily concerned with the external phenomena of experience, and may therefore be a bad judge in spiritual things. And if God created angels, there is no reason why some of them should not have rebelled against God, just as man has rebelled against God.

Probably most people will decide the question according to the view they take of our Lord's sayings in the Gospels, especially of the narrative of His temptation. If we take the view that in this matter His human knowledge was limited by the conditions of His Incarnation, or that he accommodated his words to the belief of His disciples without necessarily committing Himself to them, probably we shall be inclined to dismiss the other evidence for the existence of the devil as being capable of other explanations. It is very hard to set a limit to the possibilities of delusion in these matters. If, on the other hand, we think it more probable that in such a matter as this our Lord's spiritual insight would be superior to such limitations of His human knowledge as the conditions of the Incarnation may involve, His utterances, especially the account of His temptation, will be decisive for us.

It should be noticed that while the general tradition of Christian thought has accepted belief in a personal devil as part of its heritage from Judaism, there has never been any formal statement of the Church on the subject. The reader must decide for himself which of the arguments seem to carry most weight, if he feels it necessary to form a definite opinion in the matter.

WILFRED L. KNOX

What is 'The Holy Spirit'?

NINETY-NINE men out of a hundred take their 'colour', as we say, from their surroundings. Put them in a merry company, and they will be merry; bring them into a sober environment, and they will be sober; let them mix with drunkards, thieves, and vagabonds, and they will be exceptional indeed if they do not sink into a career of vice. It is true of men, as of God (though in a very different sense), that with the merciful they show themselves merciful; with an upright man, upright; with the pure, they are pure; and with the froward, they learn frowardness.¹ Whenever two people associate together, each catches something of the spirit of the other. And where one is strong of character, and the other weak, the weaker will inevitably fall into the ways, the habits, the vices, and even, though less easily, the virtues, of the stronger.

God is incomparably stronger than man. And, therefore, if man 'associates' with God, he will infallibly fall in with God's ways; his character will in some slight measure become like God's. He may help this process forward by disciplined effort of his own; but, however weak and poor his effort may be, so long as he is willing to be dominated by God, the change will come about in him by something akin to the psychological process of which we have been speaking—a process set up whenever two characters are associated together, and most of all when one is strong and the other weak. This is what the Bible calls 'receiving the Holy Spirit', or 'the Spirit of the Lord', or the 'Spirit of Christ'. The natural question to ask, therefore, is: 'What do you mean by "associating with God"?' But, before we consider that, let us inquire a little further what the New Testament has to tell us about this 'receiving the Spirit'.

¹ Cf. Psalm xviii. 25, 26. See A.V. and Prayer Book version.

I suggest two great texts for you to consider. The first asserts that the Holy Spirit is like *the wind*: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'¹ We all know that characteristic of the wind—its overwhelming power, its freedom from control, its refusal to allow itself to be mastered, bound, or fettered. Many people in consequence have thought that in this text 'receiving the Spirit' means becoming irresponsible, undisciplined, eccentric, and arbitrary; and many spectacular religious movements have suffered terribly, and done untold harm, because they have fastened on this idea, and made it their watchword, to the exclusion of all others. But it is wrong to take a single text and make everything depend upon it. The Bible cannot be treated like that with safety. And another text will help us to correct this first impression.

The second text is constituted by a single phrase, 'Walk in the Spirit'.² Nothing is less like the violent fury of the wind than the plodding perseverance of the walker; it speaks to us of the virtues of decent citizenship, not of the eccentricities of wayward genius. And St. Paul means what he says. A few lines later on he tells us what 'walking in the Spirit' is really like: its fruit, he says, is 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance'³—all very sedate and orderly qualities, but none the commoner for that. It is only when we put these two texts together that we reach the true secret of the way in which the Holy Spirit works.

For it is not so easy as it sounds to 'walk in the Spirit'. When we are faced with the temptations, difficulties, disappointments, and disasters of ordinary human life, the virtues which St. Paul calls 'the fruit of the Spirit' seem suddenly all to disappear, and we become hard, selfish, mean, unfriendly, and morose. Indeed, we can only

¹ John iii. 8.

² Gal. v. 16.

³ Gal. v. 22.

'walk in the Spirit' properly if the Spirit of God is blowing in upon our hearts like the gale of which the first text speaks, or burning there like fire. For God is love; the first 'fruit' of the Spirit is 'love' as well—just as 'the more excellent way' in which the Spirit comes is by giving us a love for God, for our fellow men and for righteousness, which 'suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things'.¹ What is it that helps the ordinary husband and wife to make a success of marriage, in spite of all the drudgery, anxiety, and troubles that it brings? Just a love of this sort for one another and for their children. What is it that enables the Christian to overcome temptation, and prove himself helpful to his generation, his Church, his family, and his neighbours? The same love expressed more fully towards God, and towards the world at large.

By associating with God, we have said, we begin to partake of His Spirit; that is, to show a love like His. But how do I 'associate with God'? Briefly enough, by trying to learn more about Jesus—to do the things that are according to His will—to pray that the purposes which He cherishes may be brought to full effect—by living in close contact and intimate communion with all who are trying to serve Him faithfully. That is how we associate with God, through Christ, in the Church; and those who attempt to maintain such an association need never fear that they will be left helpless in the face of the many overwhelming responsibilities that are laid upon them. For the love of God will be shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given them;² and love is the strongest of all forces known to man.

K. E. KIRK

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 31; xiii. 4-7.

² Rom. v. 5.

How is it Possible for us to be like Our Lord Jesus Christ?

I

I HAVE been asked to write something about certain questions which, I am told, a good many of the members of your club have been asking. What is the meaning of those words of Jesus in Matthew v. 48: 'Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'? What is the good of telling a man to be perfect when he knows well enough that it is impossible? Again: Of what use is it to aim at likeness to Christ, who was sinless, when one is fully aware that one is sinful oneself, and so does not, so to say, start fair? Lastly: Even if one does aim at being as like Christ as one can, with however little hope of more than a very slight degree of success in the attempt, will not one become an unmanly, priggish sort of fellow, who will only be despised by his companions who are ready to enjoy life and get the best out of it that they can, in the way of pleasure and adventure?

II

Now, first about the words of Jesus in Matthew v. 48: 'Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' We are often far too much inclined to take texts in the Bible all by themselves, out of their context and apart from the occasion on which they were spoken or written. But this is not the way to understand any book. If, in this case, we look at the rest of the passage in which these words occur we shall find that they are not really so unpractical as to require of you and me that we should try to be as 'perfect', in the sense of being as completely and faultlessly good, as God our heavenly Father. Jesus has just been speaking of people

who said that it was right to love one's friends, but that one need not love one's enemies; and he says, on the other hand, that this is a very poor, improper sort of love; not like God's love, who sends sunshine and rain on good and evil alike. Any one, he reminds us, can love their friends and do good to them; but we ought to imitate the love of God, which is a perfect or complete love, an 'all-round' love, as we might say, because it does not limit itself to the good people who love him, but extends to the bad people who do not love him. It is of this 'perfect' or all-round love which is not only for those who return it, as compared with the 'imperfect', one-sided love which insists on gratitude and what we call a *quid pro quo*, that Jesus is here speaking; it is not about being 'perfect' in the sense of particularly good. And even about this command to love bad men and enemies as well as good men and friends, a word of explanation is needed. For a man may reasonably ask whether he can possibly love his enemies as well as he loves his friends. He must then bear in mind that the word which is here translated 'love' does not mean feeling affection such as one may have for one's mother, or for one's intimate friend, or for the girl one is, as we say, 'in love with'. One cannot command people to feel affection, because they cannot feel affection to order. Nor can any one be expected to have a feeling of affection for every one he knows, still less for people whom he does not know. But the word translated 'love' here means a will to do to others as we would wish them to do to us—to treat them as well as if we loved them in the other sense. We find, indeed, by experience, that if we behave to people as if we liked them we generally come to like them—certainly to like them more than we should have done if we had indulged our feelings of dislike toward them and treated them accordingly. The enemies whom we treat as fairly and kindly as we should treat our friends will often end in becoming our friends. In any

case it is this goodwill towards our enemies, this fair and kind treatment of them, that is meant when Jesus tells us to love our enemies; the word which is used in the original Greek is a different word from that which would be used to mean personal affection. This is not whittling down the difficulty of being a good Christian. It is really very hard to treat all men as you would wish them to treat you without unfairly favouring those whom you like and taking it out of those whom you do not like. It is very hard, and it is well worth doing; but it is not impossible, as it would be to *feel* to those who treat you badly as you do to those who are near and dear to you. In bidding us love our enemies our Lord Jesus Christ sets us a difficult task, but not an impossible one. And we must remember that He Himself showed us the way. We are told that when He hung on the cross He prayed for His murderers; and the Apostle Paul says that it was while we were still sinners that He gave us the supreme proof of love in dying for us.

III

Now I will say something about the imitation of Christ which is recommended to us. Christians have always believed their Master to have been without sin, but they have never supposed that they could imitate Him in this. On the contrary, they have for the most part thought that we begin our lives, so to speak, under a handicap which He was without, an inherited tendency to go wrong which they called 'original sin'. Nor, of course, have they supposed that we are bound to imitate Him in the circumstances of His earthly life; to be all of us carpenters by trade, as He was, for example, or to give up our trade, as He did, in order to preach the Gospel, or to remain like Him unmarried and without a fixed home. The imitation of Christ which is recommended to us is an imitation of that whole-hearted obedience to our

heavenly Father and of that self-sacrificing service of our fellow men of which His earthly life was so splendid a pattern. Yet on that account to despair of following Him at all would be as foolish as to give up trying to be as good as we can at a game, or at playing a musical instrument, or at any other pursuit, because we do not expect ever to be equal to the most famous performers. We shall do all the better for pitching our standard as high as possible, and not being content till we have come as near it as we can; but nearer than that we cannot come, and no one can blame us if we have done our best. There is, however, one thing to be said about taking Christ as our standard and pattern of living which cannot be said in the same way as taking the great football-players or musicians or political leaders whom we should like to resemble as nearly as we can for our standard and pattern in those particular ways of living, football-playing, music, or politics. For we have the word of millions of men and women that in our efforts to follow Christ we can find help to do so if only we seek it regularly and faithfully in prayer and communion, not giving up the search because it does not at once succeed, but going on and on, like the widow of the parable, who got what she wanted out of the unjust judge by sheer persistence in asking. God, however, is not like the unjust judge who cared nothing about those who came to him for protection till they had worried him into doing something for the sake of a quiet life. He *does* care about us, and just for that reason He often puts our love and faith to the test. But we must remember that, however hard our trial, it will never be harder than that which Jesus Himself underwent when, while dying on the cross, He felt Himself deserted by His heavenly Father and cried out: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Thus this imitation or following of Christ which is recommended to us is to be understood neither as a vain

pursuit of an unattainable perfection, nor even as an attempt to come as near as we can by our own unaided efforts to the high standard which our Lord has set us; but as an endeavour to come as near as we can to that standard which has been put into our minds by God and carried through from beginning to end by the power of what we call the 'grace of God'—a spiritual force which comes to us through Christ Himself and which, if we let it work in us, will make us over again, as it were, in His likeness.

IV

But, supposing all this to be true, some of you may after all not be too sure that you want to be made over again in the likeness of Christ. You may be inclined to fancy that this would mean being made into something priggish and unmanly and being cut off from the enjoyments and adventures of life. I will end by trying to show that it is a great mistake to fancy anything of the sort.

No one was ever less what is called a 'prig' than was Jesus our Master during His life on earth. He was called 'a glutton and a winebibber' because He was so ready to go into cheerful company, and there were pious people who thought that He was none too careful about the character of those with whom He associated. The idea which some have that a Christian life consists in *not* doing certain things—drinking and smoking, for example—and looking down on those who do them—does not come from the Gospels. Jesus, as I have just reminded you, was not afraid of drinking wine—smoking was not invented in those days, but there is no reason to suppose that, if it had been, He would have disapproved of it. He was not married, indeed, and He blessed those who gave up the hope of marrying that they might have more leisure to preach the good news of the kingdom of God; but He blessed marriage too, and spoke of it as instituted

by God. So it may be right for a man to give up drinking drinks which, if we take too much of them, may make us lose control of ourselves and neglect those who depend upon us. We may find it hard to stop ourselves from taking too much, if we once begin; and it is often easier to have a rule of taking none than to keep ourselves within bounds when we have taken some. Or, again, it may be that our giving up such drinks may help others to keep straight; and it is certainly acting more like Christ to give up a pleasure for the sake of helping others than to stick to what one enjoys oneself at the risk of doing others harm. Moreover, such pleasures as eating and drinking are always best enjoyed not for their own sake and alone but as part of cheerful social intercourse with our friends. But they are good in their place; and, even if we give them up for good reasons, we shall be giving up what is good for the sake of what is better; and to call them bad pleasures because they may be bad for us, so that we do right in giving them up, is to behave like the fox in the fable, who called the grapes sour because he could not get at them. And, to say one word about those other pleasures which go with marriage, we are to keep ourselves pure and refuse to indulge in those pleasures until we are married, not because they are bad in themselves, but because to indulge in them for our selfish pleasure cheapens them and cannot be done without treating ourselves and others as if we were mere animals, and not as if we were human beings who are able to use our bodily appetites, as the animals cannot, as instruments in living a higher kind of life, which we call a spiritual life; a life of love to God and to our fellow men, in which there is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing which we are not glad should come to the light and into the presence of God, of whom we are told that He is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

The man who always keeps himself in touch with

Christ will not live a duller or emptier life than the man who lets his religion go. He will use his mind, for he will always be distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong to do. He will be master of himself, not carried away by the desire of the moment, and will have a fuller and more adventurous life than those who let themselves be so carried away, because his eyes will always be fixed on something better than the present, and he will never be content with himself as he is, but will ever be looking for new opportunities of serving and doing good to others and of making his own life and, if possible, that of his town and his country and the whole world better than he found it and more fit to be part of that kingdom of God which Christ came to set up among men.

CLEMENT C. J. WEBB

What is Sin?

1. Definition.

SIN is any failure or refusal to do the Will of God. All sins are grave, because they offend God. But some are not so serious as others in their effect. So we divide them, as St. John teaches us,¹ into Mortal sins; Venial sins; and sins of Omission, which may be in either class. I can render my watch useless in three ways: (i) by dashing it on the stone floor (mortal sin, or sins of will); (ii) by leaving the works exposed to the dust and salt in the air, so that they soon are choked (venial sins, or sins of weakness, when we did not in the least *intend* to do wrong, but a bad word slipped out accidentally); (iii) by omitting to wind it up (sins of omission, failing to do what we ought to do). We can kill a baby just as easily by starving it as by poisoning it. If a boy neglects to worship God, and to pray to Him, he will starve his soul; and wake up in a year or two to find that God has passed out of his life. It is most striking to notice that in nearly all our Lord's parables of Judgement the lost are lost never for what they had done wrong, but always for what they had left undone: for not using their pounds and talents; not getting oil for their lamps; not asking for the wedding garment, &c. 'Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto Me.'² There are also *social sins*, i.e. sins of the social system in which we live; for example, allowing young unemployed lads to be driven to despair by failing to provide for each an opportunity of earning his living. If we are not trying to change this system for a better one we share in the corporate guilt.

Sins of Ignorance. (a) Culpable ignorance—not knowing what we ought to know. (b) Pardonable ignorance—not knowing what we could not know. At Aldershot, a

¹ 1 John v. 16.

² Matt. xxv. 45.

recruit, absent from parade, pleaded that he did not know that he ought to be there. The Adjutant gave him ten days' C.B. (confined to barracks) for his absence; and ten days' C.B. for not knowing what he ought to have known! When a mother or sister dies whom we have neglected, it does not absolve us just to say, 'I didn't know how much she felt my want of love.' The answer is, 'You ought to have known.'

2. *The Essence of Sin.* The essence of sin is selfishness, the setting up our wills as separate centres of originativeness apart from, or in opposition to, the Will of God. This was what the Prodigal Son did when he asked to be independent of his father, and went off into the far-off country, making himself a separate, isolated centre, instead of helping his father to till the farm. God made you, and placed you in the world to co-operate with Him in the working out of His plan. He will show you day by day what He wants you to do. Acts are not good or bad in themselves. It depends upon the motive or intention with which they are done whether they become good or bad. For the motive is the soul of an act. Imagine to yourself a Red Indian in a wood with a little child on his knees, and he is cutting it with a sharp knife because it satisfies his lust to see the writhing in agony of the child's limbs. His motive is cruelty. But then turn in your imagination to the operating theatre of some great surgeon, and watch him doing exactly the same thing. He, too, has a child on the operation table, and is making (perhaps) the very same cuts in the child's limbs. But his action is good; because his motive is to liberate the life of the child from some disease or deformity, to liberate it into fuller life. He is co-operating with God's purpose as well as he knows how to do so. And the child will live to thank him for his courage and his skill.

About thirty years ago I had to prepare a poor murderer in Armley Gaol for death. He was to, be

hanged in ten days' time. While I was preparing him to repent and confess his sins, another man in Leeds destroyed three lives, and was arrested and tried. He was a chemist. He told the Court how, on the night when he had made up the prescription which caused these deaths, he had been for three days and nights nursing his wife, who was dangerously ill. For two days he had had no sleep; and when he made up the prescription he mistook a bottle of poison for distilled water; and so caused these deaths. He was sentenced for manslaughter to a few weeks' imprisonment, and deep sympathy was expressed. Now, note, the consequences of these two acts were the same. Lives were destroyed beyond recall. But the first was a sin, because the murderer had the intention to kill his enemy; while the second was an accident, because the chemist had the intention to help his customer, and not to injure him.

3. *The Consequences of Sin.* These are twofold: (a) the Temporal; (b) the Eternal. The temporal consequences of thoughts and words and deeds are knit up into the fabric of history; and, often, they cannot be remedied, as in the case mentioned above. Every thought or word or deed either enriches or impoverishes the world, helps or hinders the coming of God's kingdom, the 'order He is perpetually designing for the world'. (b) The Eternal consequences of sin are twofold: (i) The dislocation of the soul from that union with God which is its life. (ii) The resultant dislocation of all the functions of the soul, so that the heart and mind and will and conscience are out of harmony with one another, discordant, diseased.

Some people used to think that sins could not be forgiven. They said: 'Things are what they are; what a man sows that shall he reap, and nothing else; as the tree falls so will it lie. Do not talk about forgiveness.' We answer: 'Quite true: there is an element of finality in human actions which must not be ignored. Things are what

'they are, but *persons* are not *things*.' Often the temporal consequences of sin cannot be altered. But sin is personal. Its eternal consequence is dislocating your soul from union with God. And, in Christ, God takes this guilt into Himself, and is free to take us again to His heart, and bestow the kiss of pardon on the penitent son, and cry: 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' When we repent with true contrition, we must confess our sins; not to inform God as to what we have done, but to register the change of our heart, and mind, and will. We own our sins in order that we may disown them. And God, in His love and mercy, is willing to dissociate us from these sins, so that they are no longer ours.

4. *You are a Sacrament.* Man is a being with a twofold nature. By his body he has been evolved from the animal creation, and inherits all the passions, emotions, instincts, lusts, and appetites of an animal. By his soul he is made in the image of God, in his power to think, and to will, and to love. By your body you are confined to the limitations of space; by your soul you can play about among the stars. By your body, mortal; by your soul, immortal: made of the dust of the earth and the breath of God, you have to decide whether the beast within you shall tear to pieces the God, who has made your heart His home; or the God within you shall subdue and rule over the beast.

Between fourteen and twenty every lad has to fight and win his battle of self-control, so that he may form the habit of subordinating the lusts of the flesh to the purposes of the mind and will. It may help you in fighting this battle to remember these points:

(i) There is no lust or desire in human nature that is bad in itself. It only becomes bad when it is misdirected or uncontrolled. There is nothing to be ashamed of in having strong animal passions; they are the very power

which will enable you to do great things for God if you re-direct them into high and lofty channels. They are like the fires which burn in the boiler-furnaces of a great ship; they generate the power that sends the ship on its way, so long as they are kept under control and rightly directed. But if once the fires escape from control, the ship is doomed.

(ii) Remember that temptation is not sin. Our Lord Himself was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

(iii) Remember that temptation will not last for ever; in half an hour's time it will have passed away.

(iv) At puberty, when God entrusts you with the seed of life, He entrusts to your chivalry the future life of children yet unborn. If you fight your battle bravely and win self-control you will pass on to your children in the days to come a nature which is strong, healthy, and self-restrained.

(v) But the great secret of victory over our lower nature is to love what is good, beautiful, and true (our Lord) with such fervour that what is low, unclean, and selfish can find no abiding place in our hearts and attention; the expulsive power of a great affection.

Conclusion. God placed man on the earth to become a dynamo for the transmutation of physical energy into spiritual values. Every day you take in energy from the outward universe, porridge and potatoes, &c., physical energy; then, by the process of metabolism and digestion, they become your body and blood; mount up to the brain; are caught up by the mind; and issue forth into the eternal world in prayer and praise, high resolves, and a noble life of service. Sin is selfishness—an isolated ego. Salvation is losing this isolated ego to find it, expanded and exalted, in fellowship with God and man: service and sacrifice.

This is not a parson's sermon, but the secret of a manly

life. As Chaplain to General French's Cavalry in the Boer War I had the privilege of a warm friendship with that most noble Scot, Earl, then Sir Douglas, Haig. After the Great War, he joined with four other most distinguished old boys of Clifton College in sending a letter to the boys of their old School, in which they say:

'These years have convinced us all that no life is complete, no kind of life can make the world intelligible, or give us any lasting satisfaction, unless there enters into it the element which is called religion . . . the desire to find God in the universe, and to understand our relation to Him. . . . Guidance and lasting satisfaction are, we believe, to be found only in faith . . . the assurance that the life of man progresses by conformity with a Universal Spirit, and a divine beauty of character; so that every act and preference of every one of us is of immortal consequence, because it either helps or hinders the realization of the order which God is perpetually designing for the world.'

I suggest this answer, then, to the question 'What is Sin?' Sin is any failure or refusal to do the Will of God: choosing an isolated selfishness instead of a co-operative fellowship with God and man; choosing to love myself more than God and my neighbour.

PAUL B. BULL

*Is it Possible to be Good without being a
Christian? If so, What Difference does
being a Christian make to a Man? .*

THERE is a sense in which the answer to the first of these questions must assuredly be in the affirmative. It would be absurd to deny that good men existed before Christianity made its appearance, and that they are to be found to-day in the ranks of those professing other religions or professing no religion at all. Indeed, the serious opponents of Christianity are frequently men of singularly pure and elevated character.

These admissions, however, are based on a superficial reading of the facts and have little value in themselves. It is only when the goodness which seemingly owes nothing to Christianity is compared with that which actually owes everything to it that the significance of the problem can be understood. The answer to the first of our two questions can therefore be seen to depend upon our answer to the second: What difference does it make in a man's life whether or not he is a Christian?

It has been widely maintained by the more spiritually-minded among the exponents of morality that ethical principles are self-authenticating, and that they neither require nor admit of apology or justification upon grounds extraneous to themselves. Of this view the doctrine of Immanuel Kant, and, in recent times, that of Nicolai Hartmann, are outstanding instances. The Ethical Church, founded in America by Felix Adler and in England by Dr. Stanton Coit, is a concrete embodiment of the same principle. This movement, instead of placing religion before morality, is an attempt to turn morality into a religion. It will be my endeavour to show that the attitude I have thus briefly indicated involves

an inversion of the truth, or, perhaps I should rather say, that the autonomy of the moral life (which I do not categorically deny) is a derivative from principles at once profounder and more comprehensive than the maxims of human conduct. From this point of view the moral law stands related to religion very much as a local authority stands related to a sovereign power which has granted to the former the privilege of self-government.

Moral goodness and its opposite are values, positive and negative, which we attribute to human actions and to human beings. Thus we describe a man's *behaviour* and his *character* as good. Here we have two distinct possibilities of assertion, and questions at once arise as to the exact relation between them. Is it better to view character in the light of conduct or conduct in the light of character? Is a man good because his deeds are good, or are his actions good because they are the actions characteristic of a good man? Everything depends upon a still further question: Of the two factors, personality and behaviour, which is the better fitted to furnish a context of interpretation for the other?

There can be no reasonable doubt as to the answer. A mere plurality of actions, considered in itself, cannot constitute a significant context. It may indeed be *made* to do so, but only when the actions have themselves been interpreted—that is to say, when they have been placed in a context which invests them with the force of *signs*. The context in question necessarily includes the agent's personality. Indeed, the latter is the factor of prime importance. Human behaviour acquires the meaning of good and evil conduct only as an expression of the moral personality to which it is imputed. Conduct may be treated as a *symbol* of character, but it does not contribute to the *definition* of the latter. We cannot *explain* moral goodness in terms of good behaviour. On the contrary,

what a man *does* is in the last resort intelligible only as an externalization of what he *is*.

Now Christianity is above all things a state of *being*. To say that a man is a Christian, provided the statement is taken seriously, and not in a purely conventional sense, is to affirm that his inner nature, what makes him what he *is*, is completely pervaded and informed by a system of beliefs, emotions, and volitional tendencies centred upon the person of Christ. In the strictest and most literal sense, the presence of vital Christianity transforms and remakes the personality of the believer. It gives him a new *identity*: he is no longer the man he was, but another man; and his *actions* become the externalization of what *he* has become.

Thus, however similar his conduct may appear to that of a moral unbeliever, there is really no commensurateness between the two. Viewed from the standpoint of their inner meaning, and of that to which they give expression, Christian and secular morality belong to two different orders of value.

The question which must now be put is the following: What exactly is the difference which Christianity makes to a man's inner nature or spiritual self-identity, and, through that self-identity, to the *moral* identity of his behaviour?

The answer involves a special view of human nature and of human destiny. Christianity comes before the world as a power to save the soul, that is, to conserve the integrity of personal existence against all the forces of nature and of spirit by which that integrity is threatened. But how is the existence of soul or personality to be understood?

Personality is definable as a subjective system or system of experience, and experience as the mode of being to which conscious states belong. Wherever there exists an organized structure which includes conscious states,

what exists is a Person. Of course, *experience* and *consciousness* are not synonymous. There are unconscious as well as conscious experiences or subjective states; but the unconscious states of a subjective system have about them a certain uniqueness of character which distinguishes them from the unconscious states of any other mode of being—for example, inanimate objects. This is due to the fact that they belong to the same system to which conscious states belong, and that between the two modes of subjectivity, the conscious and the unconscious, there exists a functional relation.

The next point has to do with the life-history of persons. In the case of human beings, subjective systems do not occur in and by themselves. They occur in closest correlation with a well-defined type of animal organism; and this circumstance compels us to differentiate between the concepts of personality and humanity. Men and women are embodied spirits. Their personality is only one part of their nature; the other part is their animal bodies. From the beginning of life the spiritual appears in a matrix that is not itself spiritual, but psycho-physical. Human nature is a system of functionally associated psycho-physical dispositions, which may be identified, without further ado, with the instincts.

The effect of this upon man's moral nature and development is decisive. Morality demands the elevation of the spiritual principle to a position of complete and permanent ascendancy over the instinctive life—in other words, the effective displacement of a psycho-physical by a purely spiritual determinism. Such a determinism is the condition of freedom and personal self-realization.

To the attainment of this ideal (for that is how it is best described) one thing is necessary. The spiritual components in the life of instinct must be organized together into systems which are no longer psycho-physical, but definitely spiritual. A perfected morality,

which is the regulative principle throughout the whole process, is definable in terms of a completed integration or absolute unification of the spiritual self.

It is here that a secularist morality begins to reveal its limitations, and a Christian morality its strength. The former can offer no principle upon which the ethical integration of man's nature can be based. Hence the empty formality of most systems which have attempted to improve upon hedonism. At the best they can indicate the abstract nature of the ideal to be achieved, whether that ideal be coherence, self-realization, or conformity to the demands of an impersonal law. Christianity, on the other hand, begins with the discovery of an object capable of concentrating upon itself the sum-total of the forces, cognitive, affective, and conative, of man's spiritual being—an object to which man's nature may go out as an undivided whole of spirit, in a sustained and unqualified act of intellectual affirmation, emotional abandon, and volitional self-surrender. In this way Christian morality is made to proceed directly from the Christian life, and the latter is presented not as an abstract ideal, but as a concrete experience.

From the very nature of the case the object to which we must look for the integration of the spiritual components of the instinctive life cannot be found among the things of sense or in the time-conditioned occasions of a purely natural existence. These are all strictly limited in their scope, and their appeal is to what is limited and incomplete in man's many-sided nature. They may gratify the instincts severally or in groups, but they hold out no hope of a permanently satisfied self.

The only *object of experience* which can perfectly integrate the *experience of a subject* must itself be the *subject of an experience*, in other words, a Person. Furthermore, the personality in question must be complete and universal. That is to say, the experience of which it is the organized

system must be the subjective counterpart of all that is or can be known. This is the Christian conception of God, the Mind to which all secrets lie open and from which nothing is hid.

In order, however, that the subject of a universal experience should attract the energies of man's instinctive nature by concentrating the spiritual upon itself, it is necessary that the Divine Being should make His appeal through the medium of the ordinary human instincts. God must be experienced as Man if man is to respond effectively to God. This necessity is envisaged and provided for in the doctrine of the Incarnation. In the person of Christ the Divine Being is seen adapting Himself to the possibility of personal relations with the instinctively organized, the embodied spirit of man.

To *know* God is to enter into communion with Him as person with Person. It is to place the finite system of our subjectivity upon the basis of a personal or inter-subjective relationship. Such a relationship cannot be conceived as external to the terms between which it holds. In so far as it is genuinely personal, it must be construed as man's experience of God and God's experience of man. In the finite subject it reveals itself as the consciousness of a completely integrated spiritual selfhood. When fully or even partially realized, it becomes a guarantee that the personal identity of the individual is secured against all the divisive and disruptive forces of the purely instinctive life; and this is what Christianity means at once by salvation and by eternal life.

Thus, what religion offers as the salvation of the soul is the realization of the condition which alone can turn the ideal demands of morality into a *fait accompli*. Morality without religion is predestined to eventual failure. For that very reason it frequently takes the form of a desperate effort at intensive ethical self-cultivation. It cannot be denied that there is something pathetically magnificent

in such an effort. If virtue is its own reward, the good man will not go unrewarded. But in the end his success must be accounted a sublime failure. An autonomous or self-authenticating righteousness is a righteousness which repudiates the principle upon which alone the good life can be rendered self-authenticating and autonomous. Having rejected God, it must perforce fall back upon self. In its inner significance it is no better than the noblest of all egoisms. Seen in the perspective of a Christian selflessness it appears as filthy rags.

A. A. BOWMAN

Isn't One Religion as Good as Another?

ISN'T one religion as good as another? Is one novel as good as another? Because donkeys eat thistles should men eat them too in preference to corn? If your watch goes wrong do you always try to mend it with a sledge-hammer—and does it work if you do? The art of living depends upon food, material and spiritual, ideas, and companionship, and because none of us lead perfect lives we constantly need mending. Our religion is our supreme guide, healer, and driving power in the art of living, and it will make all the difference in the world to us what sort of religion we have, and what sort of religion is being lived by others around us.

A poor type of religion is generally better than none. There was sound judgement in the Hindu who declared that it was better to worship an elephant than to worship nothing at all. For by worshipping some one or something we acknowledge a being greater than ourselves, and so have a will to obey more important than our wills, and a power to help us in our moments of helplessness. If we worship nothing else we tend to worship ourselves, to set up each of us our own wills as of supreme importance—and this is the way to complete selfishness, to war with others when our wills conflict, and to despair when we fail in our purposes. But it is clearly unreasonable to pray to an elephant if we discover that, although less in bulk and age, we are yet able to be more intelligent and efficient in achieving our purpose than is the object of our worship. It might be argued that the elephant is only a symbol for the ignorant; it symbolizes the timelessness, the immensity, the power of God. Why not use the elephant as much as the symbols of any other religion? I would reply that there is no need to remain in ignorance; that although with our finite minds we cannot

discover all that may be known of God, yet we can grow in knowledge, and the more wonderful and real God appears the more true and beautiful should be the symbols by which the ideas of our religion are conveyed.

When the question at the head of this paper was put to me, I had just returned from Palestine. While there I was in close contact with two of the other great world religions, Judaism and Islam. An ex-soldier who had been living there for some while told me how at first he had thought it unreasonable to try to convert men and women of other religions to Christianity—better let them all go on in the way of worship to which they were accustomed—but experience had led him to change his mind. For myself it seemed at once obvious that only Christianity, but of course Christianity truly lived, could possibly heal the fear and hate, the squalor and disease, which seemed to be tolerated or even encouraged by religions which have not received the inspiration of Christ.

To be fair as well as wise in one's preference it is necessary to examine all the religions which the human race has evolved, see what their teaching is, and test how they work out in practice. There is not space to do this thoroughly in this essay, but if you say that any other religion is as good as Christianity, compare it with some of them.

Primitive man is undoubtedly at a disadvantage. For him the unseen world is full of spirits which inspire terror. By magic he may get their help, or even to some extent control them, so as to secure good crops or victory in battle, but for the savage the unseen remains unknown, except that it is unreliable and to be feared. It is true that the Christian admits that mystery must surround God, but for him fear is transformed to reverence; he knows knowledge is limited, but what he does know leads him on ever to further inquiry and with a spirit of confidence, for

the 'great unseen' is proved by experience to be not only powerful but entirely reliable and entirely good.

Such a system as Hinduism ranges from the fears and horrible rites of primitive man to a noble philosophy and to exercises, physical and mental, in order to achieve a mastery of the body and its passions, an escape from time and space into the absolute. But the Hindu really abolishes God, although he includes many gods and goddesses in his system; for to him the Absolute is neuter, impersonal; he does not know the joy of the Christian of communion with a Father whose nature includes personality—it is better to speak of God as supra-personal, so as not to 'make God in man's image'. Nor is it easy to find the Hindu who can say that he has found the joy of the salvation he seeks; he may mention some famous person in literature who has found it, but himself can only look forward to unending phases of life, where fate rules and happiness is denied and evil is condoned. The self-respect which goes with the idea of spiritual and moral progress, the hope which accompanies faith in God, these he does not know.

The law of compassion and mercy associated with Buddhism is something of a parallel to the Christian statement that God is love; but in the opinion of the true Buddhist there is no God. His self-discipline, his kindness, his mysticism (which are admirable in themselves) are to him only a means of escape, escape from the evil of being alive. Recent Buddhist pamphlets circulated in this country embody several ideas of a common-sense and cheerful note borrowed from Christianity and Western civilization, but in the Buddhist system, although there are excellent precepts for moral conduct, there is no joy, for in it there is no God and no human soul; the object of life is to extinguish the need of living.

We in Britain can learn much from the contemplative mind of the Hindu or Buddhist to counteract some of

our tiresome hurry and pride in material progress; a study of Confucius might lead us to a better appreciation of good manners and social duty, especially inside the family; our New Testament is evolved from Judaism, but it makes a progress on much of the Old Testament outlook; we would do well to borrow more of the fire and devotion generally associated with the history of Islam, but we need the fire of love, not of the sword, and we cannot be content with the fatalism and apathy which have, for instance, prevented the Moslem world from combating disease.

The fact of the matter is that there is no other religion which, like Christianity, presents a rational and spiritual interpretation of the universe and offers satisfaction for the highest aspirations of man. In the Christian view the universe is a unity, has purpose, is good in both its material and spiritual aspects, because it is the work of transcendent God; but God is also immanent, being revealed in the universe in its law, order, beauty, evolution—and being most clearly revealed when matter is seen at its best—that is to say, in man, who can show intellectual truth and moral goodness. It is the common heritage of the human race to have self-respect, to desire goodness. The true nature of divine goodness and the height to which man can rise is to be seen in the life and teaching of Jesus. When some one says 'one religion is as good as another' I am inclined to think that the reason for his statement is likely to be moral laziness rather than ignorance or intellectual difficulty. If a man knows anything of the faith of Jesus, whose personality and teaching are to-day making a deep impression upon men who profess all the other religions of the world, he will know that that faith makes a demand upon himself to live in regular and intimate personal relationship with the Eternal Goodness who is the source of his life, and to reveal something of that goodness of God by his own

manner of living. If a person is not prepared to make the act of faith and the effort required, he takes refuge behind excuses that one religion is as good as another. To my mind the Christian alone can claim that his religion contains the means of such thought and life as will ensure the ultimate goodwill of man with his neighbour, the union of the individual with God, and the growth of such a spiritual personality as will rise above the limitations of time and space and death.

In organization Christians may differ; denominations may interpret some aspects of their faith in different ways. No church or race has entirely lived the Christian gospel. But in not a few individuals of all the Christian sects have been found at times the beauty of the Christian life and the joy of Christian faith. Honest thinking upon this matter is of supreme importance; if the evidence is fairly sifted, the conclusion is likely to be, 'Here is a religion which is more true than any other; in the light and inspiration of it I must dedicate my life afresh.'

GEOFFREY H. WOOLLEY

What is the Church?

THE question, though simple in terms, is far from simple in fact; and not only are many answers given to it, but, as every one knows, these answers are bound up with endless controversy. In this brief paper (which is not the place for argument and, indeed, has not room for it) I shall not enter into matters of sectarian dispute. We shall confine our attention to certain main aspects of the subject, which concern all types of churchmen, even though different schools would express them differently or would add much to what will be said. Let us look at four things about the Church: first, its *origin*; second, its *structure*; third, its *allegiance*; fourth, its *mission*.

I

Obviously, the Church is a form of association. It is the organized association of people who profess to believe in and follow Jesus Christ. But it does not take its origin as ordinary associations—political, industrial, social—do. These are formed of persons of similar views or interests joining together in a society or club or federation. But the Church is not just the Christian club or association. What is it more? We must get hold of this at the outset, even though it be a high plane from which to begin.

The point may be put thus: the Church is not—not essentially and originally—an organization or association, but is what is described as an *organism*. What is an organism as distinguished from an organization or association? We see the answer to this if we look at the nature of the being of man. We might look at a man externally and say that he is an 'association' of flesh, bone, blood, and so on. But we all know this collocation is not what is a man. He is a living whole in which all these elements are united into one being. So is it—though, of course, the

illustration is not a perfect parallel, and must not be pressed literally—with the Church. It is not merely an association of people holding common religious opinions and co-operating for common religious ends. It is an organic whole, the originating, vitalizing, and unifying fact in which is Christ. Indeed, the New Testament describes the Church by this very figure—'the Body of Christ'. Here is a quite different idea from merely a fortuitous or voluntary association of people forming a Christian club.

This, to some, may seem mystical and unreal; but it is no more so than is the spiritual life of the individual Christian. The individual is a Christian man because Christ is in his life. And this society is the Christian Church in the same way. In both, the creative fact is Christ, who is in the personal life of the individual Christian, and is also common to the associated lives of all Christians. Thus a man united to Christ is, by that fact, united to all Christians. This, the original principle of the Church, which arises not (as other associations do) because man is social, but because Christ is, as well as a personal, also a catholic fact—is found at once in each Christian and in all Christians. And, as an ancient father says, 'Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.'

This is the spiritual fact which is the foundation of the Church and differentiates it from all human associations. It is spiritual, which means not that it is unreal (for spiritual fact is as real as material) but that it is not apparent to the outward senses, just as the soul of man is not. Hence, in the creed, we say, '*I believe in the Catholic Church*'. But, in this world, spiritual realities must have material expression, and thus we come to the Church's structure.

II

Let us still think of the nature of man. We have seen that a collection of various elements does not make a man, but that the unifying and vitalizing principle

within—what we call the spirit or soul—does that. On the other hand, the spirit or soul, without the body, is not man, and would be but a ghost. So, again, is it with Christ and the Church. He is its vital principle; but that needs an external form for its life and work in this world. Hence the Church's structure and its organization is what is called 'the visible Church'. This last expression is, perhaps, unfortunate, for people easily think that there are two churches—one visible and one invisible. There are no more two churches than there are two men—one of the soul and one of the body. There is and there can be but one Church, because there is but one Christ who alone originates the Church. But the Church whose originating principle is thus spiritual (and so not apparent to sight) must take a visible form, just as the human soul must have a body. The visible Church is, thus, not another Church, but is the spiritual reality of the Church made visible in a corporate form for its life in this world.

Now it is here that complications and errors and divisions arise. Let us see why and how this is so, in two respects.

First, in thus becoming visible, the Church becomes mixed and imperfect, because what is outward may be falsely assumed. The inward reality of the Church cannot be thus counterfeited. But anything of its structure can—credal profession or ritual ceremony or official status. The expression of the Church's life is thus not identical with the existence of that life itself. As history so clearly and painfully shows, there are many in the soul of the Church who are not of its body, and very many who are of its body who are not of its soul. Yet, the Church must have its body in this world; and this inevitable imperfection in its outward expression is reason not for holding aloof from the visible Church, but rather for our continually seeking its purification through the Spirit of its Creator.

• Secondly, when the Church thus takes an outward form, the outward things of its structure easily come to be regarded as the constitutive and creative things of its life. It is one thing—and a right thing—to say that the Church on earth must have a visible ecclesiastical system; it is quite another thing—and a quite wrong thing—to say that this ecclesiastical system, be it papal or episcopalian or presbyterian, or any other, is what makes it a church. Confusion about this is prevalent in many minds. To avoid it, let us keep clear the distinction between what the Church *is* and what it *has*. The Church, as we have seen, *is* a spiritual organism—Christ living in His people and uniting them to one another in Himself. It *has* ecclesiastical organization; and, while the more perfectly it has this the better, still, even where it has it imperfectly, that is a defect in the expression of the Church's life rather than the destruction or denial of the life itself. The facts of Christendom show this; and, while we do well to value what is called ecclesiastical order, we must not let our theory of this or of any other aspect of the structure of the visible Church outstrip what the action of the Holy Spirit, who is Christ living and acting, countenances and corroborates. If our ecclesiastical systems were always made subject to this test, then many of the things which divide churches would be not, indeed, ended, but kept in their due place.

A multitude of questions regarding the structure of the visible Church remain—questions on which sincere and sometimes divisive differences of opinion exist; but into these 'denominational' issues we cannot here enter, and I pass to the third aspect of the Church which was named—what I called its 'allegiance'.

III

One reason for these divisive differences about matters in the ecclesiastical structure is that Christ has not pre-

scribed that structure, but has left His Church to organize itself, and men have differed as to how to carry out His Mind and Will in matters of government and the like. But on one point here Christ was explicit. He alone is the Church's Head. In all spiritual matters—such as faith, worship, discipline, and morals—the Church must be free from any secular control from the State or elsewhere in order to listen to and learn and follow His voice alone, as that is revealed in His Word and by His Spirit. This is what is called the Spiritual Freedom of the Church. The way to understand it is to realize that it is simply the Church claiming, exactly as the Christian man claims, to have a conscience. The faithful Christian man will not allow the State or any other secular authority to rule him in matters of religion; neither will the faithful Church. Both recognize the right of the State to rule in things which are not of conscience—in, for example, property. But in matters of religious faith and practice, the Christian man obeys only his Christian conscience; and so also does the Church. This is the only genuine 'High' Churchism which is not a matter of clericalism—still less of ritualism—but in that the Church is Christ's, and, in all spiritual things, must be free to obey its one Head. A Church which is not—and which is not ready, if necessary, to suffer that it may be—a society of conscience towards Christ has lost the very idea of what the Church is by losing the idea of whose it is.

IV

Only a word can be added on the Church's mission; and this, indeed, leads us into a further question of not merely what the Church is, but what it is for. The Church does not exist for its own sake, and to conserve its own interests. Its ends are three: as regards God, to glorify His Name and do His Will; as regards its own members, to train them in Christian faith and character;

and, as regards the world, to proclaim the love and law of Christ in the Gospel and thus to convert men to Him and to serve His kingdom. How far short it comes in the attainment of these ends we can all see. But so does each one of us, who call ourselves Christians, come short. Let us, therefore, not on this ground rail at the Church's failings nor give up our loyalty to it. Let us rather rally to it and devote ourselves to its service. Let us say of it, as Pericles said to the Athenians regarding their city, 'Think what she may become, and be worthy of her.'

P. CARNEGIE SIMPSON

Does a Christian need to go to Church?

A CHRISTIAN does need to go to church, for many reasons. One of the principal reasons for going is to say his prayers. For a church is above all a house of prayer, and how charmingly Coleridge has pictured it to us:

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay.

You can, of course, say your prayers in other places, and I hope you do. A Christian, surely, is the first to realize that the whole of life belongs to God, and that prayers in church can never be a substitute for prayers in private, any more than your piety on Sunday can give you leave to do as you like during the rest of the week.

It is true that there are people who sometimes make an unreal separation between prayer and life, between Sunday and Monday. For example, there is Mr. Pump, delightfully sketched for us by Mr. A. A. Milne in his novel, *Two People*:

'Mr. Pump', writes Mr. Milne, 'was not a hypocrite. He was a religious man, whose religion was too sacred a thing to be carried into his business. The top-hat that he hung up in his office was not the top-hat that he prayed into before placing it, thus hallowed, between his feet, even if the frock-coat and the aspect of benevolence were the same. He had two top-hats, and one hat-box for them. On the Monday morning he put God reverently away for the week and took out Mammon. On the Sunday morning he came back—gratefully or hopefully, according to business done—to God. No man can serve two masters simultaneously.'

It is not hard to find Mr. Pumps in the world, with their

prayers and piety one day a week. There have always been, and perhaps always will be, plenty of them. There is a saying so old that its spelling is in Middle English, and Spenser, who records it, says it was an old saying even in his day: 'To kerke the narre, from God more farre'; or, as we should put it to-day, 'The nearer the church, the farther from God.' But that is not really true, so wise old Matthew Henry put the proverb in another form: 'It is common for those that are farthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the Church.'

It is not good for a Christian to boast about anything: 'By their works shall ye know them', said Jesus, and we may venture to hope that our lives will be so sincere and true that men may know that we have been with Jesus. But we shall not come nearer to Him by leaving the Church. What we should aim at, for the Church is the Body of Christ, is to be near the Church and also near to God; and if we are really near the Church we shall be near to God. Jesus once said, 'I will build my Church'. We may be sure He did not propose to build it for no reason. He built the Church that through it He might be with His people always. So it is good for us to remember, as George Herbert reminds us, that 'Once thy foot enters the church . . . God is more there than thou'. In other words, if we go there to find God we shall not be disappointed; He is more really present than we ourselves.

You have heard it said, no doubt, that you can worship God in the open air; some go so far as to say that you can worship Him better there. As Browning once asked,

Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that?

Well, there is just this need of a temple, that while you can say your prayers in the open air, you do not often do it. We are creatures of habit, and habits are very useful,

provided that they are the right kind. And if we make it a habit to meet God where men have long been accustomed to meet Him, it helps us; and that is one reason why going to church helps us. For what makes a church a holy place? Is it the moderator's or bishop's consecration? No, that is only a symbolical and representative act. What really makes a church a holy place is that week by week and day by day men have met God there, offered their prayers and adoration, and have heard Him speak authentic truth to their hearts and wills.

But I am not at all sure that when we go hiking into the country, or cycling, or by a bus or train, that we often meet God. It is not that we cannot, but rather that we do not. We do enjoy His sunshine and His hills, the song of the birds, and the flowers in the meadows, the splash and fall of the burn in the glen. And sometimes, when we are in a poetic mood, they do draw us close to God. Nature has that power, and we should school ourselves to be open to its influence, as Jesus always was. Yet that does not detract from the truth that, speaking generally, when we go to the country we do not go to say our prayers but to have a jolly time.

Actually, however, there is no reason why these two things, going to the country and going to church, should ever be set over against each other. Why not do both? Once again our Lord is our pattern and example here. 'As his custom was,' we read, 'he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.' Our Lord knew the value of common prayer and of the communal hearing of God's Word; these together built up a life until it was hid in God. So our Lord made a habit on the sabbath day of going to the house of prayer and fellowship.

But that was not all; for what do we read in another place? There is this record: 'And it came to pass that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day.' It upset the strict Pharisees when they saw Him doing this,

especially when His disciples began to pluck the ears of corn and grind them between their hands, blowing away the chaff and eating the corn. So the Pharisees took Jesus to task on that point. And He replied, 'The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.' But Jesus didn't say, The sabbath was made for fun; enjoy yourself to the limit. Nor did He mean that. He meant something that goes much deeper: that the sabbath was a day not so much of recreation as of re-creation. And, as His own example showed, part of the re-creation might well consist in out-door exercise, a walk in the country; but another part lay in going, 'as his custom was', to the worship of Almighty God. The sabbath was a day not merely for the refreshment of the body and mind; it was a day also for the refreshment of the spirit, a refreshment that can come only out of communion with the living God. Our Lord's own practice is the best commentary to His words.

On the other hand, I must readily, if unhappily, grant you that many, too many, of our churches to-day are pretty gloomy and forbidding, places 'where everything combines to make one dismal', as a popular novelist has recently said. But that is not what a church should be like; it should be a place where everything combines to make one joyous, for what can be a more joyous experience than the worship of God. If a church is a dismal place it is because of the neglect of its people. Often it is a sincere neglect, born of misunderstanding, of the queer idea that beauty and light disturb and distract, while ugliness and gloom minister to reverence. This lugubrious muddle-headedness is perhaps enough to drive youth from our churches, but we may hope that the reaction will be of another kind. That youth, with its splendid power of harnessing action to vision, will not forsake the churches, but on the contrary will insist upon them being made finer and more beautiful, fitting houses

for the worship of God. Let the vigour and enthusiasm of our youth, seeing visions of what our churches might be, shape a nobler tradition in our day for the generations yet to come. A shirker or a coward might turn aside and say the task is too heavy, but the man with courage in his heart inspired by love of the Master will gladly hazard his life upon the venture.

There is yet another reason why a Christian needs to go to church, and that is to hear God's Word. Not only do we speak with God; He speaks with us. We hear His voice in Scripture and in sermon, our wills are moved, and our hearts are strengthened. Again and again we need to hear the old, old story, that we may take it in. In private we must read and study too, but the public hearing of God's Word is a unique experience, strangely persuasive and enheartening. No substitute can quite take its place.

But, most of all, a Christian needs to go to church because it is there he meets the risen living Lord. There is a promise never broken: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' So conscious and so certain were Christians of this that they abandoned the sabbath, the seventh day of the week, and worshipped on the first day of the week, calling it the Lord's day because it was the day on which He rose triumphant and ever-living from the dead. And so eager were they to meet Him that they began their worship before daybreak, in order to be ready to receive Him at the hour of His resurrection when He first appeared to Mary. How beautiful it all was; how beautiful we could keep it still. No wonder Christians stood when the Gospel was read: their King was speaking to them, and their King was there. The Lord's day, not the sabbath day, became their day of worship; and it was a day of worship above all else. They might have their ordinary work to do, but first they would worship God in Christ, their living and triumphant Lord.

• And all this is most abundantly and surely true when we meet on the first day of the week, as the early Christians always did, for the celebration of Holy Communion, that feast of life and gladness, when we show forth the death of a risen Lord. As our Westminster Directory declares, it 'is frequently to be celebrated'. John Calvin, our greatest Reformer, was even more explicit: 'At the very least', he wrote, 'once a week Holy Communion should be celebrated in the Christian congregation.'

WILLIAM D. MAXWELL

Why should a Christian Man not be a Communist?

I HAVE been asked why I think a Christian man should have nothing to do with the propagation of Communism. My answer is a very simple one. There seems to me to be a fundamental opposition between the spirit of Communism, as represented by the Communist groups of to-day, and the spirit of Christianity. The opposition can be expressed in the simplest words by saying that whereas the object of the Christian is to give, that of the Communist is to take. Nothing is more truly Christian than that a man should desire to give himself and all that he has to the common service, the service of God in the first instance, and the service of mankind for the sake of God in the second. But this desire does not commit the man who holds it to any particular opinion about the political and economic system by means of which God and man can be most effectively served. Communism, as we know it, depends on a particular economic dogma which may or may not be true. And the general aim of Communistic organizations is assuredly not to give something to society, but to take something from others, and to take it by violence. The Communistic dream is of a day when the minority who believe the dogma will 'seize' political power and compel their neighbours to submit to their dictation. Now this dream of forcible dictation is totally unchristian. Christ once told a rich young man who aspired to be 'perfect' to give away all his possessions to 'beggars'. He never suggested that the rich young man would get nearer to perfection by 'seizing' the possessions of some one else and giving them away. In a word, Christ relied on the motive of love—love to God and love to man for God's sake. It is only too apparent that Communist

organizations appeal to a very different motive, hatred and envy of the persons and classes they propose to dispossess.

There can be no community between those who are moved by love and those who are moved by hate. The kingdom of heaven was said by Christ to belong to 'the poor', but the poor of whom this is said were poor persons contented with their poverty, who contemplated remaining poor. No one can read the New Testament and believe that the first beatitude was meant for a body of envious 'poor' consumed with the ambition to despoil the 'rich'.

It is a direct consequence of this difference of spirit that contemporary Communism has no place for the things Christ put first in life. At the very best, its interest in men is not founded, as Christ's was, in a still prior devotion to the God who has made man in His own likeness. Its aims are avowedly secularistic. It has no place for the commandment, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God'. The worldly goods which Christ puts so definitely in the second place are the only goods to which it attaches serious value. It is therefore consistent with itself when it appears, as it does in Russia at the present moment, as definitely and violently anti-religious. If worldly goods are the only goods, or the chief goods, religion is obviously a thoroughly evil thing, since it is of all others the most powerful of influences in leading mankind to set their hearts on something wholly incommensurable with all secular good. There is really no excuse for muddling our minds on this point of first principle. You cannot at once be unworldly and profoundly worldly; you must make your choice. Communism, as represented by the Russian Soviets, for example, is consciously worldly in its estimate of good. Christianity, rightly or wrongly, is, and always has been, unworldly, and there can be no real compromise between the two. If Karl Marx's voice is the voice of

God, we should follow him, and if Christ is the Word of God, we should follow Christ. But we cannot follow both voices at once, for their witness does not agree.

If Christianity and Communism differ in their ends, they differ no less in their methods. The method of Communism, even in this country, is avowedly that of violence. A Communistic minority are somehow to 'seize' power and use it to force their fellow men to submit to their dictation. (How much murder and spoliation the process might involve is a mere matter of detail.) The method of Christ is not force, but divine persuasion. 'My Kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.' From the Christian point of view, even the really good things of this world cease to be good to the man who comes by them only at the price of converting his own soul into that of a beast of prey. But it is only by turning himself into a beast of prey that a man rises to the position of a 'dictator', Communist or other. This again is a reason which forces me to say to the Communist what Abraham said in the parable to Dives; between us and him there is a 'great gulf fixed'. We must be either on one side of the gulf or on the other; no one can be on both sides at once.

A. E. TAYLOR

What became of the Apostles? Why do we hear so little about them?

THE question has been asked: Why do we hear so little about the disciples or the apostles? Well, in order to answer that we have to ask two other questions: first, who the apostles were, and next, what do we actually hear about them either in the New Testament or outside it? Now in the first three Gospels we do not hear a great deal: we are told that Jesus called four of them—Simon (or Peter) and Andrew, James and John, two pairs of brothers—while they were fishing, and another, Matthew (or Levi), when he was sitting at the receipt of custom. Then we learn that He took Peter, James, and John with Him when He raised Jairus's daughter and when He was transfigured: we hear of some occasions when Peter took the lead in asking Him questions; and we also hear that He chose twelve men, that is, seven more besides those whom He had specially called. These were Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, another James, another Simon called Zelotes, a Judas otherwise called Thaddaeus, and Judas Iscariot. So much for the first three Gospels. In the fourth, we have a little more; we find one Nathaniel, who is generally thought to be the same as Bartholomew, being called by Jesus; we also have certain of them speaking, namely, Philip, Andrew, Judas who was not Iscariot; and we hear a good deal about Thomas. We also know from *all* the Gospels that Judas Iscariot was the betrayer. So in the four Gospels all of them make some appearance except two—Simon Zelotes and James the son of Alphaeus. Then in the Acts we have a list of the same names as in Luke—naturally, since he wrote both Gospel and Acts. We hear of the bad end of Judas Iscariot and how he was replaced by Matthias; and on that occasion we

are told the name of another who had been a personal disciple of Jesus, namely Joseph who was called Barsabas and surnamed Justus. Later on we find that James the brother of John was beheaded by Herod. Philip, too, we hear about: but he was not one of the twelve, but one of the seven deacons who were appointed along with Stephen; and we cannot be sure (though it is likely enough) that some or all of those seven had been among Jesus' disciples; like others who are mentioned here and there, particularly Mnason, who is described as 'an old disciple'.

But when we have collected all we can out of the New Testament, the fact still remains that we do know very little about most of the twelve apostles, and naturally even less about the seventy disciples. What is the reason of this? I believe the principal one is, not that they did not amply deserve to be remembered, but that all the books, if there were any, which recorded anything about their later lives and deaths are lost. Outside the books which make up the New Testament, there are hardly any Christian writings dating between the years 100 and 150. Moreover, we only know of two writers of that period who wrote down any recollections of the early days: one was called Papias (about 130) and the other Hegesippus (about 150): and of their books we only have a few quotations, picked out, most of them, by the man who, in the fourth century, wrote the first great history of the Church, namely Eusebius. Papias tells a little about Matthew and John and Mark, and mentions a disciple called Aristion: Hegesippus gives the story of the death of James the brother of the Lord, and speaks of some descendants of Jude. We would give anything to have the whole of the books which these two men wrote, for though Eusebius preserved what he thought were their most interesting statements, we may be sure that there was a great deal more, which seemed to him so familiar

as not to be worth quoting, but which has since been forgotten: just as nowadays we find it very difficult to make out exactly how our parents and grandparents behaved and dressed, and so on; and just as we think we can never be in danger of forgetting what we do ourselves, but all the same we do forget it as time goes on.

Then we have to remember that the apostles were not chosen by Jesus because they were particularly clever, still less learned men. They were not. In our Lord's lifetime Peter took the lead among them; but the questions he asked and the things he said were not clever, rather the reverse. Still, we see that Jesus had great confidence in him, saw that he was in himself a strong character, and called him a Rock; and we see that he grew in knowledge and strength, and was enabled to be still the leader after our Lord had passed out of this world. But, as we read in the Acts, the Jewish authorities found, and were surprised to find, that the apostles were ignorant and illiterate men. Paul, who was not one of them, was in fact the only man in the early days who was possessed of the learning of his time, and was able to write (and write magnificently) in Greek.

What, then, became of the apostles? They had our Lord's commission to preach, to tell every one what they had seen and heard of Him, and especially about His resurrection. And this no doubt they did; but we have no details. There are but one or two ancient traditions which we are justified in believing: that Peter went to Rome is one, and that he was martyred in the persecution under Nero. The later story says that he was crucified head downwards at his own request. That he was crucified is likely enough, and that it was done in mockery of his Master; but that he was crucified head downwards is not at all probable. That John went to Asia Minor—to Ephesus—and ended his life there peacefully as a very old man is also to be believed; before that, he had been

banished to Patmos. We have seen too that his brother, James was beheaded at a very early date. It is also a very persistent tradition that Thomas went to India. Apart from these, who were of the twelve, we have good authority (that of Josephus and Hegesippus) for saying that James the brother of the Lord, whom we find in the Acts as leader of the Church at Jerusalem, was put to death by the Jews, and that one Simeon succeeded him, who was also called a brother of the Lord, and was eventually crucified in his old age. But neither of them was of the twelve. That very nearly exhausts our knowledge.

There was another thing which was likely enough to confuse the minds of people in after years. This was the fact that several of the twelve, and of the early disciples, bore the same names, and some had, it seems, two names. Thus there were two Jameses in the twelve, and the 'brother of the Lord' besides. There were two Simons, Peter and the Canaanite; there was a Judas besides Judas Iscariot, and yet a third, brother of the Lord and perhaps writer of the Epistle of Jude. Then, again, Matthew seems to have had another name, Levi; Bartholomew 'son of Talmai' was also Nathaniel; Thaddaeus was probably another name for one of the Judases; Philip the apostle and Philip the deacon were two different persons. All this would be difficult to keep in mind in the absence of carefully written records, of which, as we have seen, there are hardly any outside the New Testament. Not that in later days people were content with that. They said that after Pentecost the apostles met and divided the world among them: Andrew went to Greece, Bartholomew to Persia, Thomas, as I said, to India, Matthew to Ethiopia, and so on; and a multitude of legends were written about the wonderful adventures which befell them in all these countries. All of them except John, it was said, suffered martyrdom; and hence it is that the images and pictures of them which you may see in

churches represent them as holding crosses or spears or axes. But you cannot place any confidence in these later stories, the oldest of which was not written before about the year 150. In all likelihood a number of the twelve died natural deaths in Palestine and the countries adjoining it; and probably few of them lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in the year 70. The great thing about them must have been that, like the Jews in the early days, the people whom they met and lived with 'took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus'.

MONTAGUE R. JAMES

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 ANTE-NATAL, *before birth*.
 APATHY, *indifference*.
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